

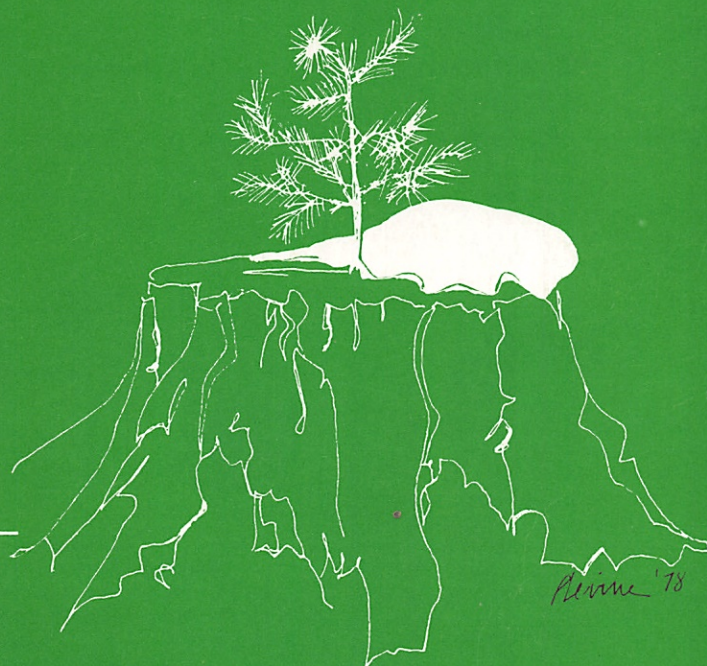
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# BitterSweet

Dec. 1980 *The Magazine of Maine's Hills & Lakes Region* Vol. IV No. 1

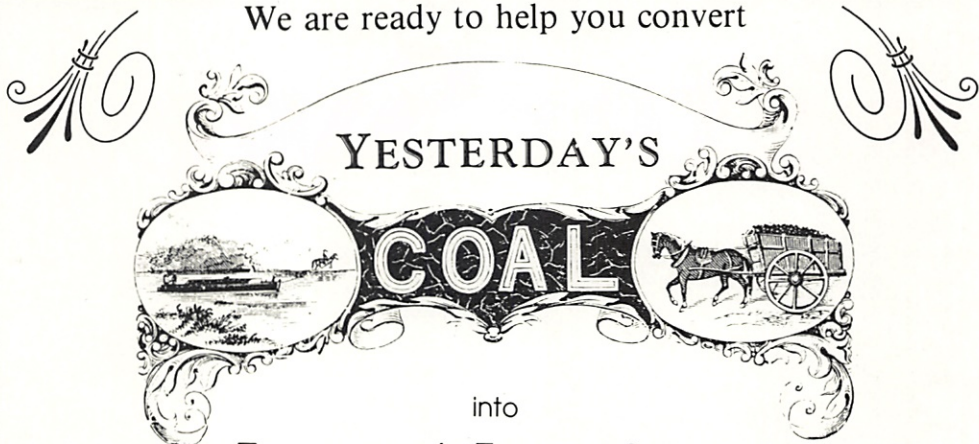
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## You don't say

### The Minces in Mince Pie

It was Christmas Day and there were almost as many small faces around the holiday table as there were adult faces. The once-resplendent turkey that had centerpieceed the table as a full-breasted, golden skinned mound was reduced to a fraction of its original size. The bowls of snowy whipped potato, orange turnip and squash and pale green creamed onions had lowered considerably, as had the relish tray of assorted pickles, olives and celery.

And now it was time for sweets. Chocolates in the shapes of turkeys and pumpkins had been brought by one grandmother. A bowl of whipped cream was ensconced close to the tender-crust apple, mince and pumpkin pies. When asked for their choice of pies, one youngster asked, "What's in mincemeat?" "Why, little minces, of course," replied the host father.

A half dozen pairs of eyes rounded in various degrees of curiosity, belief and disbelief.

"What are minces?" piped up one quick thinker.

"Little animals. Haven't you ever seen little minces running through the woods?" asked an uncle.

Silence while this was considered.

"There ain't no such thing," pronounced one of the eldest of the young crew.

"You don't believe me?" said the father with an innocent air. "I've seen them myself running around in the woods."

"Really?" asked an almost convinced questioner.

"Really," was the reply.

The children scanned grown-up faces around the table and all the grown-up heads and faces seemed to be nodding and smiling.

Oh, well, minces, squinches. Everyone decided to have apple or pumpkin pie and thought of little minces running through the woods while they ate. ☐

Alice Parks  
Buckfield

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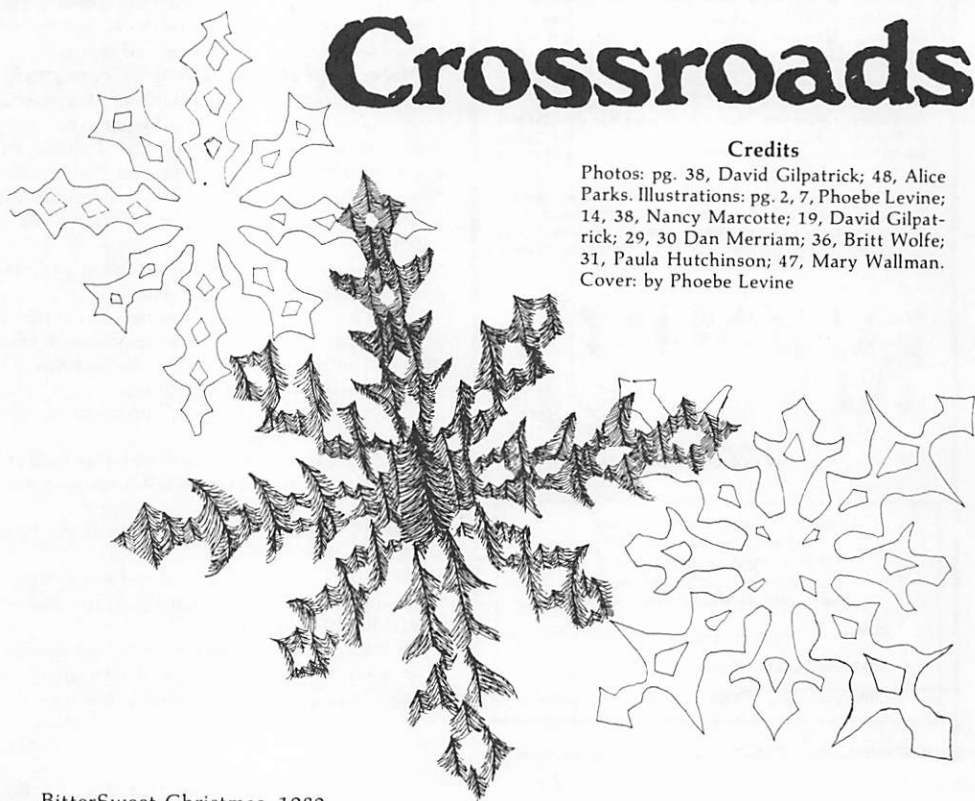
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# Crossroads

#### Credits

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## BitterSweet Views

One of our frequent and favorite contributors, Jack Barnes of Hiram, has graced our pages this month with a written portrait of Baldwin's Margaret Flint. The late author Flint wrote of life in Maine from 1937 to about 1960. Seven of her novels were published, including *Old Ashburn Place*, *Enduring Riches*, *October Fires*, and *Back O' The Mountain*, but she has been placed on the back shelf among the many forgotten women authors of that age. Barnes helps us to remember.



Also among our pages this month are tales of winter in Maine, including Mary Savignano's profile of dog sledding in Otisfield (page 10), Evelyn Frary Rich's story of winter mountain climbing (page 31) and Mary Parsons' report about the cold year of 1816 (page 39).



Jean Pottle's recipe for traditional Tortière (beef and pork pie the way she makes it in Oxford) sounds pretty good to us. While your version is baking in your oven, you might relax by reading the short story written by Martha Shaw of Bridgton, titled *Sarah's Christmas*. After that, why not head out to shop for Christmas laden with the delightful ideas provided for your perusal in our 1980 Christmas Catalog (page 21)



Every once in a while it's necessary to offer a correction for an error—this one is for our August issue. John Swinton, a thirty-year summer resident of Round Pond in Locke Mills, was mistakenly identified as Tom Swinton on two of his

poems: *Agnes Gray School*, and *Almost Only Counts* (for Beryl). A teacher of English composition and business writing at Penn State University, Swinton has had both his poetry and prose published widely.—Our apologies Mr. Swinton.



Meanwhile, keep those letters, comments, stories, poems, photographs, articles, and pieces of artwork coming in. We always welcome them. (Check below for our NEW address!)



To all of you, from all of us, Happy Holidays.



## BitterSweet

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**Subscription Inquiries:** Write above address or call 207/336-2517. **Rates:** U.S. Territory & Possessions \$9/12 issues. Newsstands 95¢/copy. Canadian & foreign addresses \$11/12 issues.

**Contributions:** We encourage the submission of manuscripts, artwork & photography. We ask that all material be from local contributors or of local interest. Please submit to The Editor, **BitterSweet**, at the above address. We will return your material if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Payment is made following publication. **BitterSweet** cannot be responsible for unsolicited material.

**BitterSweet** is published the first week of each month. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. by Western Maine Graphics, Inc.

**Editorial Closing:** Six weeks prior to publication.  
**Advertising Deadline:** One month prior to publication.



## A New Look at Margaret Flint

by Jack Barnes

A typical work day for my wife Diana and me begins when we climb into one of our two cars and slowly edge our way down the short stretch of dirt road that leads to the Sebago Road. If the roads are good, we usually choose to take the short cut, which is a mountain road, only recently tarred. This picturesque country road takes us down across Hancock Brook, by our intervale, and up and over Ward's Hill.

As we ascend to the foot of Ward's Hill, we turn right on a road which leads from Route 113 to such places as Douglas Hill, Convene, and Sebago Center. We are now in a narrow valley referred to locally as Back o' the Mountain. On our way through the valley, we cross a short bridge that spans a peaceful wooded stream called Breakneck Brook. Turning left on 113, which in part follows along the old "Pequawket Trail" of Indian times, we ascend a gentle sloping hill and approach the tiny hamlet of West Baldwin.

We pass a small Gothic Revival church and a large, sprawling house of somewhat ancient vintage, with the traditional New England ell and a magnificent old barn. This attractive set of buildings once served as a tavern where travelers who journeyed by stage to and from the White Mountains sought the warmth of a cheery fire and good country food.

A house or two beyond the tavern is the village cemetery where generations of sturdy

A little beyond the grange stands a private home, the first floor of which once served as a country store.

On the periphery of the village is a narrow structure that has been called "the Dancemore" ever since I can remember. For many decades this sturdy dwelling has been the gathering place on Saturday nights for both local and summer folk of all ages who enjoy good old country dancing and music.

Opposite the Dancemore and just before the junction with Route 5 that leads to the adjacent town of Cornish is a rather broad expanse of fields that ends at the summit of a ridge where two lovely old farms survey the Hiram and Brownfield hills and the White Mountains beyond.

On Route 113 heading toward East Baldwin stands a tall monolith which resembles a Grecian stele. Although moss and lichens have gathered on parts of the large granite stone it is still possible to read the inscription "The Deacon's Road." It was almost 135 years ago that Deacon Ephraim Flint constructed a path from his prosperous farm on Saddleback or Flint Mountain to what is now Route 113 in order that his family, and others nearby could get to church more quickly; but time and nature have altered this old road to the point where it is now only a forest trail.

The granite stele marks the beginning or the end (depending on whether you're traveling

---

**"Many have written about Maine and its people, but few have ancestral backgrounds that are so deeply entrenched in Maine soil, as Margaret Flint's and few have manifested such a profound understanding of small town and rural folk who lived among the hills of western Maine during the first half of the twentieth century."**

---

local people, most of whom earned their livelihood by farming postage-stamp size farms and lumbering, lie peacefully at rest. To our left is a familiar structure that is immediately recognizable as a grange hall. Here, for at least a century, folks from the local area have gathered for social events including the traditional baked bean suppers.

north or south) of the microscopic world that was the setting for seven of the eight novels that were written by Baldwin's Margaret Flint Jacobs and published by Dodd, Mead and Company of New York. In fact, Back O' The Mountain, Breakneck Brook, and the Deacon's Road serve as titles for three of Margaret Flint's



novels. Other places such as the grange hall, church, former store, and Burnell's Tavern can be easily identified in most of her works.

One of the two gracious old farm houses which stand on the ridge was the home in which Margaret Flint lived and wrote from 1937 until her death in January, 1960. The other is still the home of her brother, Don Flint, and his wife. A large granite water fountain bearing the inscription of their great-grandfather, Deacon Ephraim Flint, can still be seen by motorists who pass by Don's home on Route 5.

Although Margaret Flint was awarded \$10,000 as winner of the Prize Novel Contest sponsored by Dodd, Mead, and Company in 1935 for her *Old Ashburn Place* and was moderately successful with her other seven novels—*Enduring Riches*, *Down the Road A Piece*, *October Fires*, *Valley of Decision*, *Breakneck Brook*, *The Deacon's Road*, and *Back O' the Mountain*—it seems that she is destined to be forgotten as an author. Except for Baldwin and surrounding towns, Margaret Flint is not widely known today even in Maine literary circles.

She was born and reared in Orono near the University of Maine campus where her father, Walter Flint, taught civil engineering for twenty years after graduating, with honors, from the University in 1882. Her mother was Hannah Ellis Leavitt, who also graduated from the University of Maine. Years later during the height of her career as a writer, Margaret would vividly recall these childhood days in an article written for the *Portland Sunday Telegram*.

"One of my first memories is that of standing on the high embankment in front of the house in which I was born, and looking down on the Stillwater River below. Diagonally across the river, toward the north, the college buildings were visible, but far more near and real to me was the railroad at the foot of the embankment. I was afraid of those engines."

Perhaps this is why she seldom alludes in her novels to the steam locomotives of the White Mountain Line that passed daily within a few hundred yards of her farm in West Baldwin. When she does, the locomotive becomes a symbol of destruction.

When she was four, Margaret moved into a new house across the river and away from those huge iron monsters that belched fire and smoke. In her new environment she learned to



*Margaret Flint about a year before she died.*

share her mother's fondness for gardening. Their immediate surroundings were quickly transformed into a veritable cornucopia of fruits, vegetables, and beautiful flowers. Margaret Flint would never lose this affinity for the land. Instead, the passing years would only intensify her passion for the Maine soil. She also formulated a love for Maine winters. In the same newspaper article she wrote: "In winter we used to build forts of snow and have snowball fights with the children next door; and we went skating on the marsh back of the garden and sliding on the broad, rolling fields."

She recalled the camp that her brother Ralph built, how he shared it with her, and how he cried when someone set fire to it. Today her brother Ralph lives in Hiram village; he is ninety years old and still active. He, too, would always share his sister's love for the land and once owned a hillside farm in Sebago.

Margaret attended the public schools in Orono up to the sixth grade. When she was ten years old, her family moved to Port Deposit, Maryland, on the banks of the Susquehanna River where her father taught at the Jacob Tome School. Jacob Tome was a self-made millionaire, who made his fortune in lumber.

In 1908 at the age of 16, along with her older brother Ralph, she graduated from the Tome School where she had been president of her class. Despite the social life that she enjoyed during her seven years in Port Deposit, she was elated when her parents moved back to the farm in West Baldwin, Maine. She later wrote:

"I felt when the family moved to the farm in West Baldwin, Maine, as if we had come home. There was welcome on the face of the old house under the elm trees—a house which originated as a log cabin back in 1790."

Margaret entered the University of Maine at Orono in the fall of 1908 where she first majored in biology and then changed to philosophy. She also attended Simmons College in Boston, but she failed to complete the term. While at Orono she fell in love with Lester Warner Jacobs, who was majoring in civil engineering as her father had done. Margaret did not enroll at the University her senior year.

Eleanor. "I can't remember when she wasn't banging away on the typewriter. She always wanted to publish a short story and never did. That was her ambition."

Edith Coe insists that writer Mary Ellen Chase had a definite influence on her sister's decision to be a writer.

"Margaret came home from the University one summer, and all she could talk about was Mary Ellen Chase. They must have met on the Orono campus. Anyway, from that point on, there was no stopping Margaret from writing."

World War I ended, and Lester Jacobs returned safely home to his family in 1919. Soon the Jacobses were packing up and leaving their beloved Maine to return to Norfolk, Virginia.

In 1929 Lester accepted a position as manager of the Lake Pontchartrain Bridge in the Gulf Coast area of Louisiana and Mississippi. At first they lived in Slidell, Louisiana, but the family soon settled in Bay St. Louis near Biloxi, Mississippi. It was while living in Virginia and

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**"She realized full well that she was signing autographs for many people, particularly teenagers, who had never read, and probably never would read, her work. She was simply the housewife who had won \$10,000 by writing a book."**

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"Father felt she might as well leave and let Lester graduate," related her younger sister Edith Coe, on a recent visit I had with her at her home on Stanley Pond in South Hiram.

Lester Jacobs graduated from the University of Maine in 1912, and the two were married on December 22, 1913. Soon after their marriage, the young couple moved to Parkersburg, West Virginia, where Lester worked as a coal mine engineer. Later the Jacobses moved to the Pittsburgh area and then to Norfolk, Virginia, where Lester was employed as a city engineer. By the time the United States entered World War I in 1917, the Jacobses had three children—Walter, Berenice, and Eleanor. When Lester Jacobs entered the service and went overseas, Margaret and the three children, referred to as the ante-bellum children, returned to Maine where they resided in Cornish and West Baldwin.

During one of my recent visits with her daughter Eleanor in Parsonfield, I asked about when her mother first developed an interest in writing, knowing that her first novel was not published until 1936.

"Mother wrote all of her life," answered

Mississippi that Margaret gave birth to their three post-bellum children—Dana, Ellis, and Edith.

Despite her large family, Margaret continued to devote as much time to writing as possible. In 1926 while living in Virginia, she had taken a correspondence course in short story writing; despite her perseverance, none of her short stories were published.

Then in December of 1935 the telephone rang in their Mississippi home. The news was staggering. *The Old Ashburn Place*, which she had entered in the *Pictorial Review* Dodd, Mead First Novel Prize Contest, had made it to the finals! Years later she wrote about this momentous day:

"That book. Four years I had been working on it, trying it one way and then another, re-writing, copying, working mostly at night after the family had quieted down."

The ensuing days were agonizing ones for Margaret and her family. Her husband tried to assure her that she would win. Each day she awaited the mail or a telephone call, but it was while listening to Walter Winchell that she heard her name being announced to the entire



nation. Margaret Flint had won!

This stroke of good fortune came at a very opportune time, for the nation was in the throes of the Great Depression. The Jacobs family was feeling the effects of the economic dilemma. Lester's salary had been drastically cut, and their two daughters—Berenice and Eleanor—were enrolled at Louisiana State University.

"The college bills for our two daughters at Louisiana State were formidable; they were both good students, mindful of the value of what they were getting, yet just how we would manage from now on, we could not figure out," she recalled in a newspaper article written in 1957.

Now, at the age of 44, after thirty years of unsuccessful short story writing, Margaret Flint Jacobs had met with instant success with her first attempt at writing a novel.

On December 22, her birthday, Margaret was on a train for New York where she would be treated as a celebrity. She met with prominent literary people, was called upon to give numerous press conferences, and at most functions she was asked to speak. A teetotaler, Margaret Flint astounded the editor of the now defunct *Pictorial Review* by passing up the New Year's celebration to catch a train back to Mississippi to be with her family.

Once she was back in Mississippi, however, her life did not return to normal. She was yet to realize the tremendous demands made upon one who is suddenly propelled to fame and fortune. She received numerous requests to speak from various organizations, including the Louisiana State University School of Journalism.

"Family privacy," she wrote years later, "was impossible. I was further interviewed and photographed, and I learned the hard way never to face the camera without first going into a huddle with the mirror and the make-up kit."

Once she said she was caught totally unaware. Her hair was stringy, and she looked as if she had "just murdered her husband."

She soon came to understand the meaning of "autograph mania." In an article she wrote for the *Lewiston Journal Magazine* a few years before her death, she described the nightmare of it all.

"I signed my name on programs, in albums, on paper napkins, staining my fingers with strange fountain pens. I gave advice, when asked, to aspiring amateur writers. I ate

enough chicken-a-la-king to last me the rest of my life."

She realized full well that she was signing autographs for many people, particularly teenagers, who had never read, and probably never would read, her work. She was simply a housewife who had won \$10,000 by writing a book.

Perhaps the interview that she would have enjoyed the most would have been with Dorothy Dix, who actually lived quite near her and whom she held in very high esteem. However, Dorothy Dix refused to see even her agent.

"I admired her good taste and dignity, and decided always to emulate it," she later wrote.

Much time and space has been devoted thus far to Margaret Flint and the excitement that ensued her winning the \$10,000 award and having her very first novel published, but what about the book itself—*The Old Ashburn Place*?

Margaret could have chosen the South to provide her with the characters and the setting for her work as William Faulkner did and as Eudora Welty has done so successfully. She spent enough years in the South; she understood the South; in 1938 while back in Maine she would even write a novel about the South—*The Valley of Decision*—but she never really came to love the South.

"As far as my mother was concerned, there was no place but West Baldwin," explained Eleanor Mitchell, the only surviving member of the ante-bellum children.

Those who have delighted in reading Gladys

---

## PUZZLE MOUNTAIN

This is where the road ends,  
Where it finally gives up  
Its winding life and pours  
Quietly into the pasture.

Now that it is finished  
I want to embrace all the cows,  
I want to kneel down in the twilight  
And thank the mice.

This feeling of joy,  
Where does it come from?  
Either from the cool grass  
Or the pointy trees  
Or the blossoming stars.  
Does every riddle need an answer?



Dorsey Kleitz  
Paris

Hasty Carroll's *As the Earth Turns*, should find *The Old Ashburn Place* equally as entertaining. Most of the plot spans a period between 1900 and the 1930's and focuses upon a closely knit Ashburn family and two brothers—Charlie and Morris, whose roots run deep into the soil on a hilltop in Back O' the Mountain in Parkston (West Baldwin).

In the "Prelude" the reader meets Charles Ashburn hoeing corn and reflecting upon the twenty years that have passed since he first met and fell in love with Marian Parks.

"Charles Ashburn, hoeing the young corn on the southwest slope of Saddleback (Flint Mountain), was far from beautiful. Not tall nor especially broad, he yet had the look of a powerful man. At the age of twenty, he had seemed all of thirty-five; now, at fifty he was just the same. . . . years of toil under the summer suns, and the dazzling whiteness of Maine winters, had long since burned and creased his naturally fine white skin into the semblance of weather-beaten age."

Clearly the years that Margaret Flint lived in the South did not erase the indelible impressions that Maine and Maine people had engraved upon her memory.

Although Margaret Flint claims not to have taken any of her characters or incidents from real life, her sister Edith Coe insists that Charlie Ashburn was in fact an actual person, and both sisters seem to have vied for his attention, especially at dances.

"Margaret and I used to argue over Azzy, as we called him. Azzy liked me fully as well as he liked her," Edith chuckled. And then she became serious and added, "I never could understand how she could take a friend and write about him, but Azzy never seemed to mind."

Edith Coe described the location of the Ashburn Place as being at the very end of a road at the top of a mountain in the area referred to as "Back O' The Mountain." Her description fit the place described by several other local people as being the actual setting for the novel. The fact is, it seems very likely that Marian Parks, who graduates from the State University and summers in Parkston and with whom Charlie falls in love, is in reality Margaret herself. Although Charlie and Marian are poles apart in many ways, each has an attraction for the other. Even though Marian later marries a boy whom she met in college, a flame for Marian continues to burn within Charlie's heart, and Marian continues throughout life to cherish her friendship with Charlie. In the "Postlude" Charlie, at the age of 50 seems to have

accepted his station in life and put his relationship with Marian in proper perspective.

"To Charlie, she was always the same, and he was still her good friend, Charles Ashburn. What matters if his heart did turn over at the sight of her? He knew he was alive, anyhow.

Charlie rose slowly to his feet, settled his hat over his eyes, took up his tool and went back to hoeing corn."

In the spring of 1937, a tragedy befell the Jacobs family; Lester passed away, leaving Margaret a widow with six children. As soon as the schools closed for the summer vacation, Margaret packed up her family and they headed for West Baldwin. Although friends from the South would come north to visit with Margaret and the family over the years, Margaret would never return to the South. At last she was home among her beloved hills and the folk to whom she was most endeared.

Despite the herculean task of rearing six children, remodeling the old homestead, canning fruits and vegetables, and being an impeccable housekeeper, Margaret never neglected her writing. Eleanor Mitchell, in the process of describing her mother's busy life style, had this to say: "Mother had had no patience with people who would say 'I should like to write if I only had the time.' Mother found the time!"

And this is quite true for Margaret Flint published seven more novels in rapid succession. Like *The Old Ashburn Place* her characters and setting were staged in the Baldwin-Sebago area.

"My sister saw the story in everything," Edith Coe says.

Margaret often claimed that she had no imagination. "I have to take what I see and put it into a story," she once told an audience.

She was active in the local grange and seldom missed a baked bean supper. It was during these socials that she gleaned many of her ideas for her novels. Then, of course, there were her six children who always knew what was going on in the community and contributed much to the local color that permeates each tale.

One local woman said to me one day during a conversation about Margaret Flint, "I could hardly wait until Margaret's next novel was published to see who in town would be in the story."

One can see a similarity between Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street*, for example, and Margaret Flint's novels. Lewis' characters are easily iden-

Page 46...



This is the strange story of Charles F. Gilpatrick, who, at the turn of the century, was known as "The Greatest Marvel of the Age." A South Hiram native, Mr. Gilpatrick, when but a teenager, was stricken with a strange malady which was to result over the years in the complete ossification of his body. By 1898, at 42 years of age, he was completely helpless in bonds of stone—possessor of all his faculties, sight, and hearing, yet unable to move a muscle.

## South Hiram's Ossified Man



by Herbert W. Clemons

My grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Butterfield, of Hiram, knew Mr. Gilpatrick personally and remember talking to him. Grandpa was a local peddler of farm produce and used to visit with Mr. Gilpatrick at least once a week. Before he was completely helpless, Mr. Gilpatrick would take his cane and strike his lower extremities to indicate that he had no feeling of pain there. By the time that the process of ossification was complete, his jaws had set and some of his teeth had been extracted to enable him to swallow liquids.

During the early 1900's Mr. Gilpatrick went on an exhibition tour through the United States. He was on display in many store windows—reclining on a pillow and balanced on a pedestal. The following excerpts come from a *Portland Press Herald* account dated May, 1908:

Cornish, Maine - Charles F. Gilpatrick, known in the amusement world as the "Ossified Man," spent several days the past week in town with his manager, Augustus Hornbrook. The object of his visit was to look up a small place to buy, that he might settle down later in life near the scene of his boyhood. . . Charles L. Abbott, *Press Herald* correspondent, was the first to introduce him as a curiosity, having taken him first to the Cornish Fair, later to Gorham Fair, after which Boston parties took him in charge. . . He has seen the country from Maine to California and tells many amusing incidents of his travels.

The last time that Grandpa saw him, Mr. Gilpatrick was at home in South Hiram and was balanced as he is in the photograph above. He died shortly thereafter at the age of 57. The following obituary appeared in the *Press Herald* on Feb. 9, 1914:

South Hiram, Maine - At the home of his sister, Mrs. Alpheus Gilpatrick, Charles F. Gilpatrick, known all over New England and many other states as "the ossified man," passed out of life Feb. 7, aged 57 years. His was the only known case of complete ossification in the world, and the like may never be recorded in history again. He was a strong, healthy boy with no apparent disease until 12 or 14 years of age, when this hardening process began, which no medical skill could reach, and which made rapid work until the summer of 1898 when it had completely gone over him and since that time he has been unable to move or help himself in the least, but has lived and breathed in a living tomb of stone. It seems wonderful that in all that time his mind has never become impaired. He was a great reader and had the most wonderful memory. He was always pleased to see his friends and always very cheerful. He said to many he was the happiest man in the world, that although the Almighty had seen fit to encase his body in a case of stone he had never felt a pain in all these years and felt perfectly satisfied with his lot. □

Clemons is a genealogy and history buff living in Hiram.



## Dog Sledding, Pickett Style

*by Mary Savignano*

**For Cathy and Grey Pickett of Welchville,  
the sport of dog sledding has become serious business.**

Dogs can be good companions and fine watchmen. But often, for all the food they eat, trips outside and accidents on the braided rug they are more trouble than they're worth. At the Pickett household in Welchville, however, not only do the dogs carry their own weight, they often carry the Picketts as well. The Picketts are avid dog sledders.

Grey, Cathy and Sara Pickett of Kooksac Kennels became interested in dog sledding in a round about way. It began in Oregon six years ago while the family was hiking with their dog, Zack. Zack carried his own pack full of dog food.

In 1975, the Picketts and Zack moved back to Maine to set up housekeeping.

During the next couple of years the family acquired four more dogs. They continued their overnight packing expeditions with their dogs and their six-year-old daughter, Sara. Then, in 1976, they happened upon a 50-year-old dog sled in a barn in Winthrop. After negotiating a price, they took the sled home and rebuilt it. In January of that year the Picketts entered their first race up in Shirley Mills.

It was a short run on six miles of railroad grade. The teams were run at one minute intervals. Grey entered with five dogs. Out of 16 entries, he finished fifth.

Four years later, Grey is president of the Downeast Sleddog Club. Cathy is club secretary. And the couple's interest in sled dogs has become serious business.

To begin with, there's the Kooksac Kennel. There, the Picketts raise Siberians for themselves and for sale. I passed a groggy three-week-old Siberian pup while making my way to the diningroom table. Siberians are the oldest untouched breed of sled dog, having been introduced to Alaska around 1900 and then brought to Poland Spring in 1927. The dogs' arrival in Poland Spring marked the beginning of Siberians as we know them today in the United States.

A major part of raising the dogs is training them for life on the trail. Although Siberians are what the Picketts are attached to, the breed is not the best for racing, they say. The dogs are too smart. Cross breeds are actually a wiser

choice for sled competition. Hounds are a favorite of racers because of their speed. A mix of part hound for quickness, Siberian for endurance and Alaskan for temperament and performance would make the perfect sled dog, says Grey.

One of the most common problems the dogs pose for sledders is dog fights, both in the kennel and while under harness. Grey has developed a way to house his dogs which he feels helps reduce the problem. He uses dog houses with axles to which the dogs are chained. The animals are given enough chain so that they can touch noses, but not enough so that they can get at each other. In this way, they can get acquainted prior to taking to the trail and it seems to Grey the system makes for more cooperation while they're sledding.

But, most important of all, according to Grey, is the special knowledge a sledder has for his individual dogs. Having already established that Siberians are too smart to be great race dogs, the driver must be able to outsmart them. There are times during a long race, for instance, when the dogs will be panting and dragging as though they've given their all. Then a rabbit will happen to cross the trail and they're off and running like bionic canines. Cathy can attest to this. While camping in Kikadjo, near Moosehead lake, she was out with her team and the dogs seemed exhausted. Suddenly a moose stepped into the trail. Her dogs took off and didn't stop until they had dumped her in a snowbank, and tangled themselves in knots. There was no moose in sight.

Sled dogs are taught three fundamental commands. "Gee" which means right, "Haw" which means left, and "Hike" or go. Some racers don't bother with it, but the Pickett dogs also learn "whoa." It's essential that they know at least the three commands because that's how they're guided during the race. The whip that the drivers are allowed to carry is three feet long, made out of rawhide, and barely reaches the first dog. It's mostly for noise.

The Picketts also show their dogs. If Grey's heart is in training and raising, Cathy's heart is in the showing. She shows the dogs for obedience and confirmation and took a second place last year at the Lewiston-Auburn Kennel show with her prized 7-month-old Jezebel. Jezebel also entered her first race last winter and was the dog that lead the team home.

Cathy and Grey's enthusiasm has recently drawn them into harness and sled making.

A dog sled is not easy to find and the people who make them have waiting lists up to a year

## EXCEPTIONS

This is Christmastime

When hearts are filled with love and joy...

(Except where fear and panic reign.)

Church bells, sleigh bells, gay bells chime

Echoing a glad refrain...

(Except where bombs and battle din

Deafen ears of homeless refugees.)

Lights embellish city streets and above

The rural hills there is a star...

(Except that evil never sees

Beyond its own bleak misery and sin.)

Resplendent heavenly hosts appear;

Great choirs of angels voice

Their tidings of an infant King,

And spread the exultation far...

(Except that starving people cannot hear

Nor yet rejoice.)

This Child was born to bring

Peace on our earth, goodwill to men...

(But when?)

Otta Louise Chase

Harrison

long. So Grey, along with his friend, Jim Lolley, started a business last year called "Beaver Sleds." Using all the ash wood they can find, they build dogsleds.

The biggest problem, at this point, is finding wood. Ash is not easy to harvest in the wild, and if it's bought milled, the price is prohibitive. A handsome, lightweight, model was made from wood found at Moosehead Lake. With a couple of pillows added, it would fit perfectly in someone's living room.

While Grey assembles sleds, Cathy makes harnesses and sled bags, using nylon webbing instead of the traditional leather. Last winter, her harnesses were chosen by a New England competitor for use in the prestigious 1049 mile Iditarod race from Anchorage to Nome, Alaska.

Grey and Cathy know they'll never be world champion dog sledders. For one thing, serious sledders say that good racing dogs can't also be pets. Nor can they be purebreds. But, it's purebred Siberians that the Picketts love best and their prize, Jezebel, is as at home in the Pickett living room as she is on the trail.

However, they have found a hobby that is not only an exciting family activity but profitable as well. And that's enough for the Picketts and their 17 dogs. □

*Mary Savignano, who lives in Auburn, discovered the Picketts while a reporter for the Lewiston Sun last year.*



## TWO SNOWROLLERS

Like an aged couple,  
Gazing downward over sloping fields  
Cleared two centuries ago from a pristine forest  
By reticent and workworshipping Calvinists,  
Two decaying snowrollers huddle together  
As if their shrinking frames,  
Decaying from years of exposure  
To harsh elements of Nature,  
Feel the cold as old people do  
When their bodies too become withered,  
And the flow of life begins to ebb.  
Cold winds sweep down from dark hills,  
Sending swirling snowflakes  
Dancing over the neglected landscape  
That once produced wheat and corn  
And lush pasture for sheep and cows.  
Below in the distant valley  
Where swift waters splashing down  
Over moss-covered rocks beneath arched trees  
Once turned the wheel of the mill  
Where skilled hands gave birth  
To these two vestiges of yesterday—  
Shaped and fitted them together with loving care,  
And out they were taken—  
Hitched to prancing horses,  
Their rippling muscles glistening in the early sun—  
The same sun that still rises above the purple hills—  
Mute witnesses to those days  
When these old snowrollers were young  
And turned over and over,  
Packing down the newly fallen snow—  
Soon to be persued by sleek trotting horses,  
Drawing sleighs filled with people—  
Young people—old people,  
Happy and gay in their togetherness—  
Imbued with love for these hills and valleys  
And pride in their farms and land  
That provided their simple needs.

The years flew by as years do;  
Factories in distant cities  
Belched black smoke  
That clung to brick walls and white curtains—  
Produced automobiles and gasoline engines;  
And the farm boys left these lands,  
Lured by bright lights and painted women—  
By money and easy living—  
Moved into crowded tenements—  
Toiled long hours,  
Poisoning their lungs with polluted air.  
Progress brought paved roads and automobiles  
to the country—  
Horses gave way to tractors;



The sleighs were stored in empty lofts,  
And the old snowrollers were abandoned  
To sit forlornly in this empty pasture,  
Watching monstrous steel trucks with flashing  
lights  
Thunder over the highways  
That were once quiet country roads,  
Pushing hugh plows  
That send white snow flying through the crisp air  
To land at the foot of the old snowrollers.  
The roar of the engines and the rumble of the  
plows  
Echo through the hills and vales  
That once knew more pleasant sounds—  
The jingling of sleighbells  
And the merry laughter of children  
Coasting down the hills—  
Swift as arrows they flew  
Over layer upon layer of snow,  
Packed hard by these same snowrollers  
That now lie wasting away.

All who were a part of this idyllic scene—  
Those who played out their roles  
On this stage setting so long ago—  
Have one by one been laid to rest  
In the family cemeteries scattered about;  
Only the two old snowrollers remain—  
Motionless and silent—  
Half hidden by snow,  
And some day they too will vanish,  
To mix with the elements  
From which they so long ago sprouted,  
And there will be no one who will remember  
That these two old snowrollers were ever here.

*Jack Barnes  
Hiram*

# You don't say

## The Word

People began to establish themselves on Hiram Hill around 1795. In due time it became necessary to erect a school house which came to accommodate twenty-five or more pupils. It also served for a time as a place for religious services. Having no regular minister, members of the congregation took turns conducting a service which consisted of prayer and song and testimony in which each one stood up and expressed their faith and confessed their sins.

One member of the congregation was generally spoken of as Auntie and in the venacular of the time she was "simple-minded." She never testified but seemed to silently enjoy the proceedings.

One Sunday the congregation was graced by the presence of a travelling Parson who conducted a service and took testimony.

Noticing that Auntie was the only one who had not spoken he said, "Oh sister why are you silent? Do you not have a word for the glory of the Lord? Come now speak!"

Auntie leapt to her feet and shouted "Hi biddy martin, tiptoe GOD."

The Parson was aghast: "Oh sister how can you speak so sensually in the house of the Lord? I chide you severely."

Auntie replied: "Well I got the good word in anyway!" And with great dignity she stalked out of the room. □

Raymond Cotton  
Hiram

## TWO HORSES

White, often tinged gray,  
they hauled logs on wooden skidder  
down rutted road to waiting truck.

Sometimes they'd stop, simultaneously blow,  
their bellies bouncing in and out  
like punctured volleyballs.

One "Gee up!" and they'd strain  
into harnesses, heads down,  
stepping where tractors couldn't go.

Just work horses, a matched pair.

They never pulled at fairs, but  
each had a roomy stall  
marked by a hand carved sign,  
"Big Dan" always left, "Miss Molly," always  
right.

That's how they stood that day  
of their only ride  
in the glue factory truck.

JoAnne Kerr  
Weld

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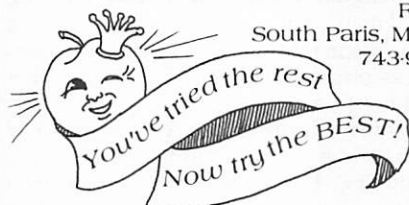
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# Homemade

## Toot'-Shay Not Touche'

by Jean Pottle

For most of us there is a special event or association that triggers the Christmas spirit. It may be the first snow, the taste of fruit cake, arrival of the first Christmas card, or the cutting of the tree. For me, Christmas arrives with the smell of Tourtière.

Tourtière is a meat pie probably of French, but certainly of French-Canadian tradition which some families serve throughout the year. It was special in our house because we could have this treat on Christmas and New Year's days only. It was the law that no one tasted tourtière (we pronounced it toot'shay) until after Midnight Mass when the family had returned home for pie, cranberry sauce, and to open one present.

As a child I sometimes ate tourtière at relatives' homes during the holiday season, but no pie could match my mother's. It was so much a part of Christmas for me that I can still remember the emptiness I felt one year when mother decided not to make it.

On my first Christmas as a wife, Mom asked me to make the tourtière. Although I enjoyed most cooking, I approached this task with a good deal of anxiety. Mother gave me her recipe and I followed it carefully. The apartment smelled like all the Christmases I remembered and the pies were good enough so that a skeptical, very French-Canadian Uncle conceded that they were O.K. and ate several pieces.

Tourtière is still an important part of my Christmas and I bake several pies each year. The first is served on Christmas Eve but, unlike

my mother, I continue to serve the pies throughout Christmas week. The last tourtière is always finished on New Year's Day.

There are many recipes for meat pie, but here's the one I like best.

### Tortière

½ pound ground pork  
1 pound ground beef  
¾ cup cold mashed potato  
1 finely chopped onion  
salt, pepper, sage  
pastry for one pie

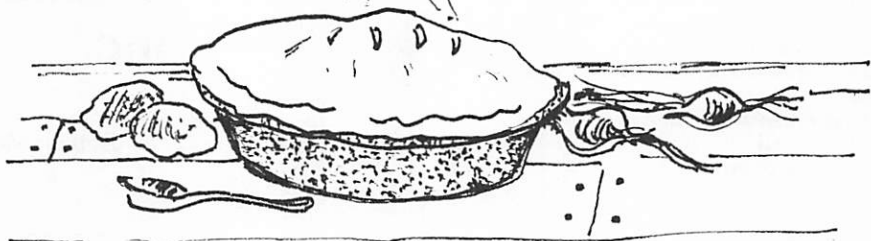
Saute the beef and pork in a frying pan. When the meat has lost most of its pink coloring, drain off any fat which has collected. Add the chopped onion and continue to cook until the meat is completely cooked.

Remove from heat and add the potato, 1 tsp. of ground sage, salt, and pepper. Mix. Taste.

You may need to add more salt, pepper, and sage. This is a matter of personal taste. Keep trying until you have what appeals to you.

Place the mixture in a pie crust and dot with butter before adding a top crust. Bake in a 400° oven for 10 minutes until the crust has started to brown. Reduce heat to 375° and continue baking for 50 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool.

The pie may be eaten immediately, but I prefer to cool it, cover it with aluminum foil, and reheat it later in a moderate oven.





# Goings On

## NAPLES WINTER ACTIVITIES

The Lake Region Choral Art Society will perform on Dec. 5, place and time to be announced.

There will be a Christmas auction on Saturday, Dec. 6 and Dec. 13 at 7 p.m. at the Naples Fire Station, Rt. 302.

Registration for snowmobile races will take place the morning of Jan. 11, Jan. 25 and Feb. 22, with the races to be held in the afternoon all three days on Long Lake, Rt. 302.

The Southern Maine Dog Sledding Championship races will be held on Long Lake all day on Feb. 7 and 8. The Fireman's Broom Hockey Tournament will take place at the same time.

The Fireman's Ball will be held April 25 at the fire station on Rt. 302.



## COMMUNITY PANTRY

Oxford County Community Services has sent out word that the agency will sponsor a community pantry to provide foodstuffs to people in need. Victims of fire, financially-draining family illness or emergency economic hardships of almost any kind will qualify for a donation of enough food to feed the family for a three day period.

Volunteers will collect food donations at various sites throughout the county and boxes containing about \$50 worth of food will be pre-assembled. When a need is determined the box will be immediately shipped.

Local fire departments, police departments, churches, hospitals and social service agencies will serve as referral agencies.

Anyone wishing to donate food should watch for the appearance of collection boxes in local stores. Foods to be collected include cold cereals, flour, rice, pinto and kidney beans, instant potatoes, macaroni and cheese dinners, evaporated milk, jams, canned soups, meats, fruits, and juices and packaged drinks.

Any organization wishing to sponsor a food drive or make a (tax deductible) monetary contribution to the project should call OCCS at 364-3721 or write Deborah Carll, CFNP Coordinator, Oxford County Community Services, Swift River School, Roxbury, Me. 04275.

## CHRISTMAS FAIR AND TEA

The West Parish Congregational Church of Bethel will present its annual Christmas Fair and Tea, Saturday, December 6, 1 to 4 p.m.

The Fair will feature Christmas Crafts and Christmas decorations; a Christmas Greens table with items for holiday decorating; homemade candies and baked goods, and attic treasures.

Tea and refreshments will be served by the fireplace in Garland Chapel during the sale.

## CHRISTMAS CONCERTS

The South Paris Congregational Church will present a special Christmas Concert featuring the Southern Maine Chamber Music Ensemble on December 21st at 7:30 p.m. Music by Brahms, Bach, Wolf, Debussy, Ravel and Ives, among others. Donation at the door.

"Babes in Toyland" will be performed by the Music Department of S.A.D. #17 grades 6-12 on December 11 & 12 at Oxford Hills High School Auditorium. Admission charged.

## BRAINTEASER XXIII

### PRICKLY PROBLEM

How many spines has the hedgehog? It's no use counting them because, of course, you can't see the other side of the animal.

But if the number of hedgehog legs is divided into the number of spines, you will have a remainder of 1. If you divide the total spines by the number of eyes and tail, you will have a remainder of two.

And if you take the number of legs, eyes, tail and nose and divide this into the number of spines, the remainder is 5.

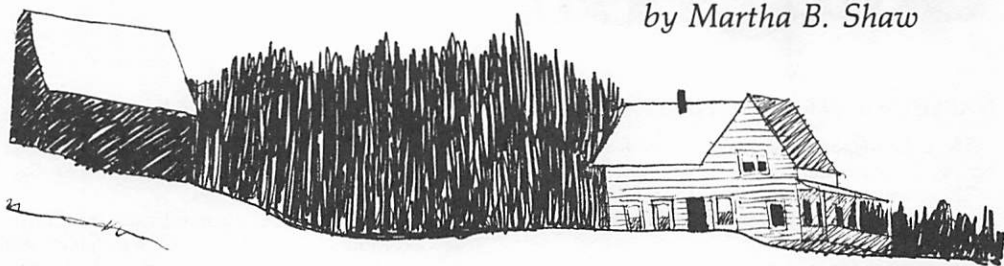
There are three digits in the number of spines, incidentally, and they add up to eight.

What is the total?

No one has sent along a correct answer to Brainteaser XXII so we'll hold off publishing the solution. Those reasoning correctly concerning Brainteaser XX, however, include Christina Rowden of Bridgton, Frank and Mary Perham of West Paris and Hazel Ford of Norway. They figured that since the tennis matches were to be held for three weeks and one day there would be 22 days of play involved. In order to have one match scheduled on the final day and the same number of matches on all the rest, there would have to be six matches scheduled daily.

# Sarah's Christmas

by Martha B. Shaw



She put the last pie on the rack to cool and closed the door of the oven, her face flushed rosy from the heat. As she lay the pot holders on the counter a frown appeared on her face. She gazed out the window—not seeing the fields and gardens all covered with snow. The sky was the deep dark blue that usually only comes in October.

But Sarah was oblivious to all this and was mentally checking off items on an imaginary list.

"Let's see, the turkey is thawed, the vegetables are all ready to go; I finished the pies, got the things out for the baby. Everything's wrapped except some of the things for Dan. I'd better go check their room again."

And off she went, upstairs to the guest room to make sure everything was perfect for this visit from her daughter and son-in-law and their son, Pete. Although Sue and Dan had been back to the farm several times in the few years they'd been married, this was the first Christmas they would have spent here since Charlie died. She and Sue had always gone to Sarah's sister's house in Connecticut for Christmas. After Sue was married Sarah always went to their apartment in the city. But now there was a grandchild to start traditions for, now enough time had gone by so that Sarah should be able to handle Christmas at home without Charlie.

Sarah looked carefully around the large comfortable guest room. It was, as she knew it would be, spotlessly clean and ready for company. She sat down on the bed and allowed herself to think of Charlie.

She thought of the days before they were married, and the time following their wedding before Sue was born. The world had existed only for the two of them, and it was a glorious, sparkling world. She thought of the sun-drenched autumn afternoons when they walked in the meadow out beyond the house.

Somehow, each always knew what the other was thinking and could start a conversation in the middle, without fear of misunderstanding. Life was good, thought Sarah—and love was good—too good to last, she thought. She remembered how she used to make a wish on Venus, the evening star, which often twinkled at her in the twilight. And always it was the same wish—"let it last—please let nothing happen to spoil this." She couldn't imagine life without Charlie. The hurt would be so great it would suffocate her. There was just no way to understand an emotion that huge and awful and overwhelming. She'd always push those thoughts away; no sense worrying about something that might not ever happen.

But it had happened, all right. In what seemed like an instant, her whole world smashed at her feet. In a way she was glad it had been an instant. She couldn't have borne it if he had been ill for a long time. No. If he had to go, perhaps that was the best way. If he had to go...

And now here she was, living through the hurt every day, the hurt she had been sure she couldn't stand for a minute. "But time is a great healer. In spite of us, time heals our wounds," Sarah thought. "The hurt isn't like a knife in my middle anymore. It's as if the knife cut out a large part of me and there's just an ache where that part used to be."

"And it just doesn't seem like Christmas with Charlie gone." A tear rolled down her cheek.

Briskly she got up, smoothed the place on the bed where she had been sitting, glanced around once more and headed downstairs just as the telephone began to ring.

"Oh rats, somebody wants me to do something and I just don't have time," she mumbled as she reached for the phone.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Mom. It's me," a voice answered from far away.

Sarah's stomach tied in a knot.

"Hi, Honey. How are you? Is anything wrong? I thought you would have left by now."

"Oh, Mom, we can't come after all. Dan's boss, you know him—George Atkinson—was in a car accident last night and everything's in an uproar down here. They don't know whether he'll even live or not, but Dan can't get any time off except Christmas Day itself. They said *maybe*, he'd be able to get an extra day at New Year's so we might be able to come up then. I'm so sorry, we wanted to come so

"I'll call you tomorrow afternoon. Give my love to Dan, won't you?"

"Yes, of course, Mother. Are you sure you'll be ok?"

"Sure. Don't worry. Bye Hon."

"Bye, Mom."

Sarah hung up the phone while the tears poured silently and steadily down her face. Her mind was a blank as she went to the shed, donned jacket, boots and mittens, and headed for the barn.

The barn was quiet and peaceful; a good place for thinking and talking to one's self. Animals make excellent listeners. "And they are always glad to see me," thought Sarah, "no matter how miserable I am."

She stopped in the horse stall to say hello to her favorite mare, fed her one of the carrots which she always had in her pocket and went

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**"Christmas morning dawned clear and cold. Sarah fixed the fires and had a cup of coffee before going out to the barn. The animals welcomed her as usual, and she wondered as she always did, if at midnight last night they really did talk? Then she laughed at herself for such foolishness."**

---

badly. I know you've been fussing even though you promised you wouldn't. Why don't you come down here? Maybe it's not too late to get a plane reservation and I'll meet you anytime." The knot tightened, like a fist.

"No, honey I won't come down. I'm sorry about Mr. Atkinson. I do hope he'll be ok. Dan will have enough problems without his mother-in-law underfoot. Besides which, I probably couldn't get anyone to care for the animals at such short notice. The Allens have gone to his sister's house for the holidays."

"But Mom, I really don't want you to be there all alone, I worry about you!"

"I know you do, but don't Hon. I'll be ok. It certainly won't be fun for either of us, but we'll manage. And we'll plan a visit as soon as Dan can get away. How's Pete?"

She tried so hard to sound cheerful. Sue must be able to tell it was forced. But Sue was acting, too.

"Oh, he's fine. He's gained another pound and has a new tooth. Thank goodness he's too little to know what's happening."

"I'm glad he's fine. Sounds like the perfect grandson!! I'd better let you go—this will be getting expensive." "And I can't go on faking it much longer," she thought.

from there to the pen where the sheep were kept.

She entered the pen, fastened the gate and sat down, leaning against the wall. Immediately, three black faces were investigating and welcoming her.

"Girls, tomorrow's Christmas and the kids can't come. I have all that food, and all the presents and I don't see how I can stand it here all by myself." And the tears started again.

One very young ewe started chewing on Sarah's gray-flecked brown hair.

The rest of the day she spent putting the food in the freezer and wrapping the gifts she hadn't quite gotten to.

After dinner she bundled up and drove to the village for the Christmas Eve service at church. She loved to hear the familiar carols, the Scriptures and the Choir.

Christmas morning dawned clear and cold. Sarah fixed the fires and had a cup of coffee before going out to the barn. The animals welcomed her as usual, and she wondered as she always did, if at midnight last night they really did talk? Then she laughed at herself for such foolishness.

After breakfast she opened the presents that had come from her sister, other friends and



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family. It all seemed pretty pointless.

She was knitting some mittens for Pete that  
afternoon when the phone rang.

"Merry Christmas, Mom!" cried Sue from  
several hundred miles away.

"Merry Christmas, yourself! How is every-  
body?" Sarah answered.

"Mr. Atkinson is much better—They think  
he'll be ok—And Dan can have two extra days  
after New Year's because he's working all this  
week. So we'll be up next weekend if it's ok."

"Of course it's ok. It's great—Plan to stay as  
long as you can."

They chatted for a few more minutes and as  
Sarah hung up the phone she thought to herself  
that she'd better get another turkey.

Before she went to the barn that evening to  
do the chores, she went for a walk across the  
fields. Venus was twinkling at her from the  
western sky and all the world was blue and  
pink and white.

"Well, Charlie," said Sarah to the night,  
"this certainly wasn't the best Christmas I've  
ever had. First I looked forward to it and then I  
was afraid of it. I guess it was me, not Christ-  
mas, I should have been afraid of. But I've  
lived through everything since you've been  
gone, and I suppose there are many more  
things left for me to live through."

"And although I miss you so, the love we  
shared for many years, is with me still, and is a  
great comfort to me."

Sarah turned back toward the barn. □

*Martha Shaw writes poetry and prose at her  
home at Someday Farm in Sweden.*

## WINTERSONG

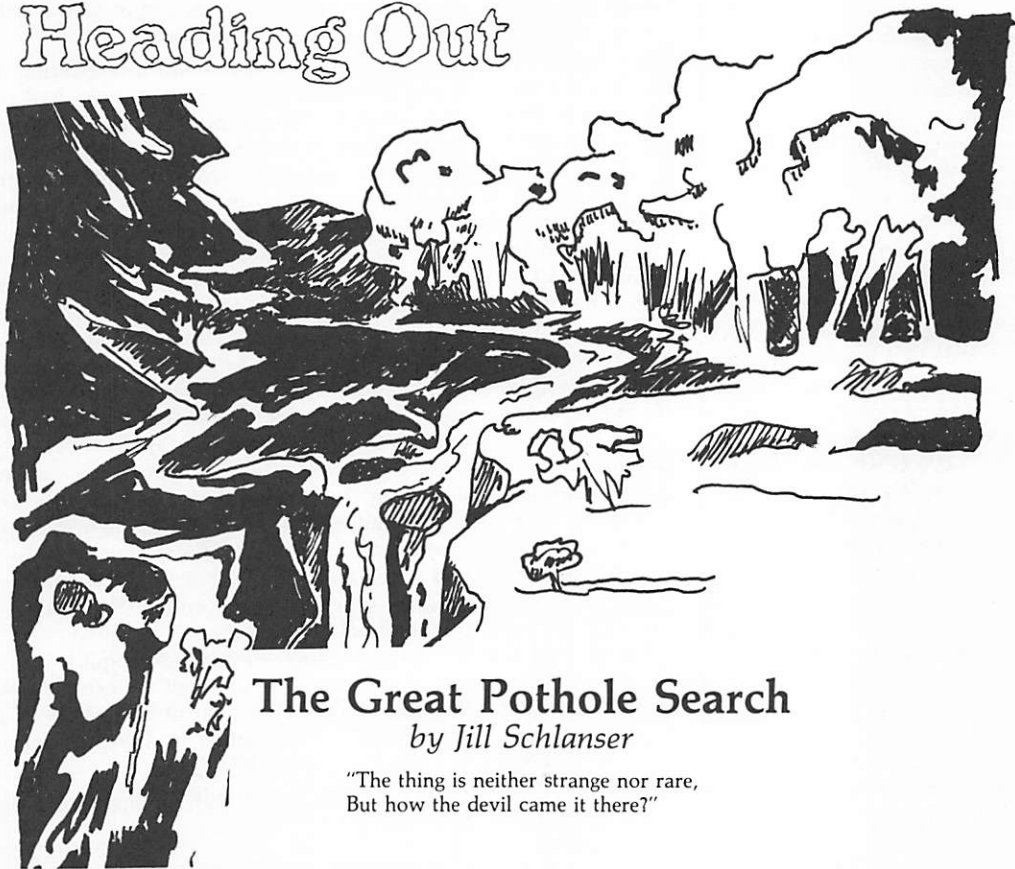
Sing a song of icy days  
When wanton wild winds wail.  
Sing a song of falling flakes  
Along a forest trail.

Sing a song of whitened peaks  
Against a threatening cloud,  
When all the jewelled branches  
Knit lace for winter's shroud.

The ones who praise the beauty  
Of this frost arctic show  
Bask on some sunny southern sand  
**WHILE WE ARE SHOVELLING SNOW!**

*Otta Louise Chase*

# Heading Out



## The Great Pothole Search

by Jill Schlanser

"The thing is neither strange nor rare,  
But how the devil came it there?"

Thus wrote Messrs. Lapham and Maxim in their *History of the Town of Paris*, telling of the pothole above Snow's Falls. Was it made by Indians or by water? So far above the present course of the river, water seemed unlikely. So smooth and regular and deep—such hard work for the Indians. The mystery intrigued us for several years.

Our interest was sparked by discovering and reading the notes of a talk given by the late Miss Gertrude Brinckle at Hamlin Memorial Library on Paris Hill in the 1960's. Miss Brinckle was recounting all the places in the area that she had known as a child but which were now forgotten—the Cave, the Maybanks, Saints Rest and the Indian Trail. She said "My Mother knew where the pothole was at Snow's Falls." But none with whom we talked knew of it any longer.

The final clue to spark us into action was finding amongst our grandmother's papers a copy of a scholarly monograph by George H.

Stone, from the U.S. Geological Survey, entitled "The Glacial Gravels of Maine." It described and sketched the pothole at Snow's Falls. This monograph definitely answered the question of the origin of the pothole—definitely glacial and not Indian. It gave some directions for finding it; about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile west of the falls—240 feet by aneroid above the falls, half-way up the side of a cliff, etc.

We started our first exploration five strong at the Falls. Now, did '240 feet above' mean up the stream, or up a hill behind? We decided on the latter and started to cross the stream. The only way across is on the crumbling walls of the old mill that used to be there, a way so scary that two of our group declined to attempt it. Three brave souls dared the traverse however.

We followed the railroad tracks on the other side, looking for a trail or path that might lead to the top of the bluff above the Falls. Eventually we found a promising trail, but time was growing short and it was necessary to leave further exploration for another time.

On the second expedition, we decided to attack from another direction to avoid the scary crossing of the Falls. We drove out High Street to a likely looking road, followed it to a farmhouse, and took on foot an old logging trail between stone walls toward the river. We followed a branch which led behind the bluff that was above the Falls.

With great difficulty we scrambled up almost vertical slopes to a granite ledge on the top. It was here that it really came to us that we were looking for a needle in a haystack. How could we ever hope to find a one foot hole in a granite ledge which, by now, might be filled in with dirt, with a tree, possibly, growing out of it. We were discouraged and gave up the search for that year.

We tried again in succeeding years, however. We studied Geological Survey maps and found trails to a number of summits which looked as though they were crowned with bare granite ledges, and set out to explore them each in turn.

One trail led through a quiet pine grove, carpeted with needles, to an old deserted barn at the top of a hill, but there was no granite there and no indication it could be the spot. Another trail led to a lovely high field with a view of the surrounding hills. Still another passed through an abandoned orchard with a rusting haying machine next to a stone wall. In none of these cases was there a sign of a granite ledge.

A geologist friend accompanied us on an exploration in 1978. We tried scientifically to follow a contour line at 700 feet around a number of the hills above the Falls. After breaking trail through woods and gullies for most of the day, we returned with only scratches and mosquito bites to show for our efforts. It did seem to be turning out to be an impossible task, but we enjoyed the explorations anyway. They had become part of our annual summer ritual—Looking for the pothole.

Last year, an old-timer told us the pothole might be near an Indian burial ground adjacent to a small swamp. We searched our maps again and found one or two swampy spots marked. Consequently we enlarged our search area to include them. We took a trail past the remains of an old farmhouse, marked by a stone foundation, some granite steps and a fallen down shed. Our trail branched and faded, so now we decided to ascend the heights.

We each chose a hill and went exploring individually. This area was bushy and forested and covered with leaves and growth. Even the tops of the ridges were not bare granite in

which we might have expected to find a pothole. We were not optimistic.

Our available time was fast disappearing. It was almost time to turn back. No one had yet seen anything interesting. One of our group stopped on the top of a ridge to look around before retracing steps to the trail. Looking down, her eyes froze on what was a dark pool in the leaf-covered forest floor, like a black tarn. She looked away—then back. Could it be? It HAD to be. "Here it is!" she screamed, and the others came running.

Yes, there it was. Measuring later with a stick, we found it to be as described, two feet deep, one foot across, in granite, covered and concealed with moss and leaves. The sides were smooth as silk all the way down. Feeling its rounded bottom, we discovered a smaller dimple in the base. It was a miracle that we ever found it—certainly not the highest point around, all too easy to miss it even if we had had specific directions, but unmistakably the pothole. Our search was ended. Satisfied, we trekked back to our car.

It would be impossible to give explicit directions to find this pothole, but we can tell you this: it is marked by a sign cut into a tree—a T in a square. Now, another mystery! Who put that T there, and when? □

*Jill Schlanser spends her summers on Paris Hill.*



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they say I'm crazy—  
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alone!  
...drinking brandy  
in the snow...  
soft  
gentle  
flakes  
that linger where they melt...  
...sitting in the dark  
composing  
poems  
(my thoughts...all mine)  
...running...  
in the rain...  
free!  
alive!  
laughing...  
but crazy...  
so  
they  
say!



*janice bigelow  
west minot*



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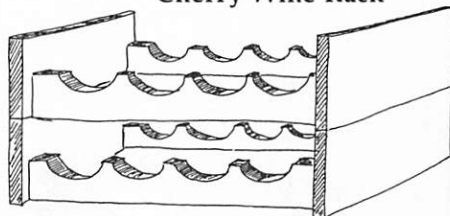


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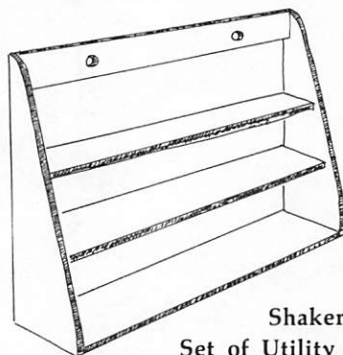


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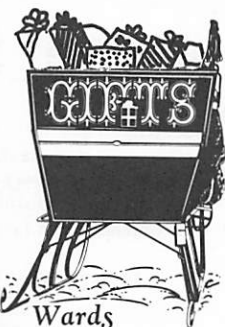
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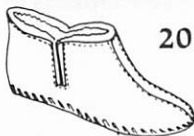
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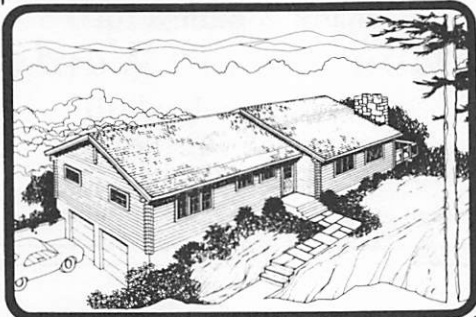
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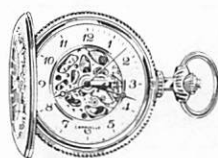
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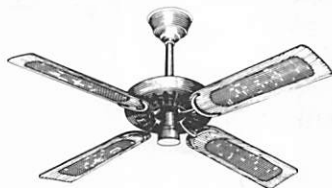
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# BitterSweet

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# Readers' Room

## At Last! A Diet that Works.

by James Keil

After years of following fruitless, meatless, sugarless, starchless, and generally useless diets, I think it's high time somebody came up with a diet with teeth in it. One that really works.

Eating out in a restaurant is a problem that proves to be the undoing of many a well-meaning, yet poorly disciplined dieter. There is no reason why a good restaurant could not cater to that overweight someone, seeking to lose a pound or two, yet still manage to satisfy that craving for the "untouchables" of the corpulent set.

To accommodate the lack of willpower among its patrons, the entire staff of this diet-conscious restaurant would need to be highly trained, and have weight loss in mind at all times.

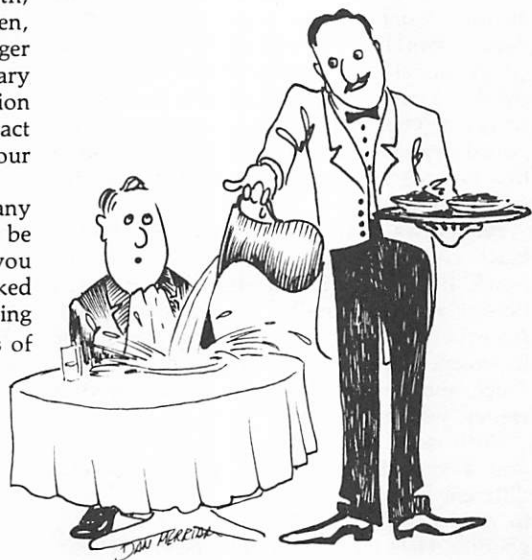
Naturally, the menu would have to be replete with all the old favorites of the round person: heavy appetizers, filling and plentiful; substantial entrees, with thick, rich gravies and sauces; and the inevitable baked potato, smothered in butter, or sour cream, or both; home-baked bread, steaming from the oven, and lost in butter, tantalizing even the meager appetites among us; thick, rich, sugary desserts, destined for a permanent position along the waistline, or thigh, so sweet they act as a geiger-counter in search of a cavity in your teeth.

This restaurant would be the same as any other in all ways but one: the help would be specially trained to keep you thin. Just as you would dip your fork into that steaming baked potato, the waiter, who was at your side filling your water glass, would spill two thirds of the pitcher onto your potato, turning all your sour cream and butter into a sea of sickening soup. This waiter's training would be so sophisticated that you would not even be aware that it wasn't an accident. Nevertheless, he would have succeeded in lessening everyone's appetite for baked potato.

So, hungry dieter, you've given up on that baked potato, and turned your attention to that thick, juicy filet mignon. That's what you really wanted, anyway. So far, all you've had is salad, and the busboy dropped the dressing tray, so the only thing left was oil and vinegar, and that had a fly in it. You gritted your teeth and ate that, but, you're still famished.

You dreamily savor the first bite of that delicious steak, losing yourself in the ecstasy of charcoal broiling. As you sit, knife and fork in hand, poised for the second bite, the waiter, in a dark corner by the water glasses, gives a sharp tug on a piece of piano wire attached to your steak, and zing! Your plate is empty.

Again the cosmopolitan cultivation of sophisticated service to the dieting public shows in the actions of this superbly conditioned waiter. No one at your table is sure (it happened so fast) whether you finished your steak, or, if you ever had it at all.





No matter, because, by this time, your confusion has deepened, as your table is swarmed by busboys and waiters, filling your water glass, putting more butter on your bread plate, even though you never got any bread. The chef appears, bedecked in a cooking apron, and a large, white hat, asking you if you enjoyed your meal. Before you can answer, violins begin a serenade, flamenco dancers twirl lightly around your table, a small circus aerial act swings from the beams overhead, and, in the shadows, out of the corner of your eye, you think you even see a sword swallower performing. Of course, all of this has taken your mind off that delicious meal you never had.

As you watch the waiter pour you a cup of black coffee (the sugar has solidified in the bowl), he asks you if you would like to see the dessert menu. Naturally, you say you would, since you are still starving. You choose the ice-cream sundae, with flaming butterscotch sauce, and your selection is applauded by your waiter, who admires your taste.

With much fanfare, the dessert chef serves you a gigantic goblet, heaped with several different flavors of ice cream, which he buries in no less than 10,000 calories of heavenly goodies. His tuxedo glistens in the candlelight, and his gold cufflinks sparkle, adding to the fascination of this culinary creation. At last, he

finishes, and you pick up your spoon and take aim on the dish, mentally savoring each 250 calorie bite, even before it reaches your mouth.

Once again, your diabolically clever waiter has anticipated your lack of willpower. Carefully hidden under the cherry topping, a small charge of plastic explosive has been wired, which detonates with the touch of your spoon, blowing away everything but the dish, which now sits empty in front of you. The busboy appears, scooping up all the empty dishes, including your ice cream bowl.

Naturally, you can take no more, and you storm out, leaving \$1.50 on the table, even though your bill reads \$47.90. This is fine with the management, however, since all you really ate was a small salad, one cup of coffee, and two glasses of water, and they'll be able to use the steak over again. For your part, you should be happy, because on this diet, you won't have gained a pound—even after dining out.



*Keil lives and works in Naples*

# 1922 Winter Climb of the White Mountains

by Evelyn Frary Rich

It was Washington's birthday in 1922 and we were visiting my husband Harold's aunt and family (the Coolidge family) in Gorham, N.H. Gorham is a small town in Eastern New Hampshire, surrounded by the White Mountains. Harold's family lived on a farm in Bethel, Maine.

Harold was an avid and experienced mountain climber, and he had already introduced me to that sport the previous summer by taking me on a trip to the top of 6,293 foot Mt. Washington, the highest of the White Mountains.

When he proposed that we climb Mt. Madison, I was all for it. So was his 16-year-old cousin, Madeline Coolidge, who joined us. Hardly anyone ever climbed the White Mountains in the winter in those days.

We set out on this bright and sunny morning, warmly dressed, and carrying our snowshoes and a good supply of food. We wore old wool Army pants, wool coats, wool sweaters and wool hats. On the way up the mountain Harold built a small fire and we ate our lunch of hot bacon, bread and tea. Then we continued our climb. At times the slopes were so steep that our snowshoes kept slipping back, but we thought that was part of the fun.

Late in the afternoon we reached the Madison Spring Hut, a low stone building just above timberline, and about three-quarters up the way to the top of the mountain. The temperature then was near zero, and it continued to fall to way below zero before morning. My husband soon had a good fire blazing in the small stove using scrap wood which we got from inside the cabin, and dead branches from the scrub growth outside. We ate some of the food in our packs, and soon after, went to bed in the bunks arranged on both sides of the hut. There were plenty of warm blankets, so we slept soundly until morning.

For breakfast, we added to the depleted supply of food we had brought some items we found in the cabin, which was occupied only in the summer months. These included pancake mix and some rancid salt pork. However, our hunger made even the pork palatable, and we ate heartily.

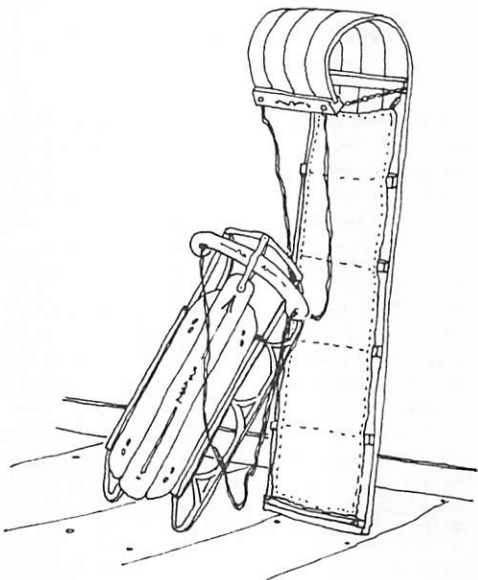
One would have thought that we should now descend the mountain while the weather

was good but no, there was another challenge nearby in the form of Mt. Adams, which Harold couldn't resist. So we set out to climb that mountain, which is higher, and about as steep as Mt. Madison.

Before we reached the top, a snowstorm started. We continued on our climb. As the storm worsened, I feared that my husband couldn't find the way back down to our hut, but he succeeded without difficulty. After resting awhile, we descended Mt. Madison, and when we were nearby at the foot, we met a searching party equipped with ropes, pails and other supplies. It seems that Madeline's mother had become worried about our safety and called for help in finding us. We were sorry to have caused her anxiety, and a little annoyed that she doubted our ability as mountain climbers.

We suffered no ill effects from this adventure, and it has remained a pleasant memory all through the rest of my eighty-three years.

*Mrs. Rich, a resident of Bethel until her husband's death in 1976, now lives with her son Stuart in Eugene, Oregon. Stuart has continued the family climbing tradition as has his son, who is an Outward Bound Instructor.*



# Folk Tales

## Great-Grandmother

by Lauri Genesio

I ring the doorbell and patiently wait for the door to open. Suddenly a small, wrinkled face with bright blue eyes peaks through the small crack she's allowed. After a short greeting we retire to the living room and begin our involved conversation.

This woman, at eighty-five, my great-grandmother, is exploding with information I can't escape—history that I desperately want but must dig for with great determination. I must know of her past for her's is mine. So I listen and ponder her intriguing tales... wondering what is being held back for a later time and



always wanting it all then.

Her undying determination and achieved independence I admire most. With Gram's stories I can understand life, her life, a bit more—the pitfalls, challenges, and blissful triumphs of growing for nearly an entire century.

Lauri Genesio  
Sweden

*Lauri, daughter of Jerry and Judy Genesio of Sweden, Maine, is a junior at the University of Maine. Her great-grandmother, Christina Haggett, lives in Bridgton.*

---

## You don't say

### Hear The Hungry Howl of The Swampcoot

One frosty morning recently Jeff and Cathy Chapell opened the door of their Five Corners Market, at the busy junction of Route 11 & 26, and found the place in a shambles. On top of the meat case sat a crouching swampcoot chewing contentedly on a ham bone firmly clutched in its sinewy paws.

Cathy screamed, snatched a can of New England clam chowder from a shelf and heaved it at the critter. Then Jeff took after the voracious little beast with a broom. But the nimble-footed thief slithered between Jeff's legs and disappeared into the swamp out behind the store still clutching the ham bone in its paws.

Don Kent, an outdoorsman well-versed in wood and animal lore, says the only way to deal with a thieving crouching swampcoot is to trap it, skin it and peddle the fur, or else take it in as one of the family and enjoy its company.

"Crouching swampcoots prefer good home-cooked food. They tire of munching on bark, wrinkled frozen berries and buds all winter long. They'll swipe a pot roast right off your dinner table," warned Kent.

Ever since their first encounter with the ravenous crouching swampcoot, Jeff and Cathy have been putting a pot full of grub out behind the store every morning. In a flash the swampcoot comes loping out of the swamp and happily devours its meal.

"It's getting expensive," moans Jeff. "That wily thief won't accept ordinary fodder anymore; it demands gourmet food. Unless I serve up a medium rare porterhouse steak garnished with mushrooms, complemented with a chalice of imported red wine and topped off with pie or cake, the fang-toothed glutton sneaks into the store and carts off all it can carry in its big paws."

And so it seems that Jeff and Cathy's dinner guest is here to stay. When they hear the hungry howl of the crouching swampcoot it's time to set out the vittles. Steak and eggs will do nicely. □

Firgone Poon





## Jay's Journal by Jay Burns

Since it's been two full years since the hills and lakes region has been cuffed around by a wild winter storm we are not prepared for what lies ahead. We've grown soft. To help get in shape for the coming hard winter, let's talk about winter storms.

Famous December storms that I wasn't around for were the Triple Storms of December 1839. In December of that year three storms of great strength battered New England.

The first swept across New England on the 15th and 16th of the month. In the Boston area ships in the harbor ran aground as gales ripped the area. In Gloucester more than fifty vessels were driven ashore and nearly 50 people lost their lives. In Maine, Brunswick received a foot of snow but far downeast at Eastport not a flake fell as the storm raced out to sea.

The second storm, on the 22nd and 23rd, was much less severe than the previous one. The storm ravaged the mid-Atlantic coast but spared New England its full fury.

But the final storm of the series, on the 27th and 28th, was greater in scope than either of the previous two. The precipitation shield covered more of New England than the other two. Destruction to property was greater and blockading of communications was more serious.

About eighty ships were lost along the New England coast during the three storms and property damage ran close to a million in 1839 dollars. Many other ships were heavily damaged in the boisterous early winter of 1839.

Another storm which I was around for was the January 25th storm of 1979. Described as being hurricane-like, it was forecasted to go out to sea south of the hills and lakes region.

The night of the 24th was windy from the northeast but dry. In the morning a very light snow was falling. It seemed as though the storm would go on out to sea as predicted. But by midmorning the tempo of the snow had increased. The National Weather Service quickly reversed themselves by issuing a heavy snow warning. The snow became severe by mid-

morning and lashed the hills and lakes region throughout the day. By noon on the 26th fourteen inches had been dumped on the area.

What makes this storm memorable is that after its initial pounding it hung around up in the Nova Scotia area of Canada. It lashed us again with eight more inches of snow on the 31st of the month. For twelve days the storm held the hills and lakes region under its spell.

Then there is the super snowstorm of January 1831. The remarkable feature of this storm was not the winds which marked the triple storm to come eight years later, but the large amount of snow that was unleashed. In Boston, 24 inches of snow fell in a 30 hour period. In Keene, N.H. nearly two feet of snow fell. As far south as Pittsburgh, Pa., 22 inches of snow was deposited.

However, despite the huge snow accumulation along much of the Atlantic seaboard, Maine itself was unaffected. Only a trace of snow found its way into Portland.

May winter 1980 treat us as well. □

*Burns, a senior at Oxford Hills High School, serves as a weather observer for WCSH-TV.*

### WALKING HOME

dry leaves  
scattered by the hard blunt leather  
toe of a boot  
rising  
and falling to earth  
each again perfectly placed  
the sound floats up to me  
stiff scratchy fragrant  
filled with the moments  
recorded in those dry veins  
beckoning me  
to some understanding  
my eyes are drawn  
to those still pinned  
to trees  
each held delicately  
by a final moist kiss  
vessels emptying of life  
i pass on  
behind me  
i hear  
the thunder of trucks  
crossing the bridge

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# Medicine For The Hills



by Michael A. Lacombe, M.D.

## MEDICAL SECRETS

A common belief, so the story goes, holds that the medical establishment is not levelling with patients. Certain medical secrets and miracle cures are being withheld from the population-at-large. The story goes further. This medical establishment is ignorant of—or perhaps more correctly, oblivious to—certain obvious remedies such as penicillin for colds, vitamin C for malaise, and Laetril for cancer.

This withholding of cure is not done with any particular malice, it is said; it's just that the medical community is uncaring and, it could be said, representative of only one approach to the problem of disease. There are equally sensible answers to be found in holistic medicine, rosehips, and cosmic rays.

In this extreme, this idea that the science of medicine is really all wet strikes most of us as ludicrous. Witness the public reaction to a parent's withdrawing a leukemic child from established chemotherapeutic protocol and sending this child to a Mexican Laetril clinic and to certain death. Those of us with any sense must have shared a primitive anger and sadness for that child.

But lesser degrees of mistrust of medicine abound; everywhere people search for that magic bullet that will kill disease. And maybe, just maybe, some people believe, bizarre and irrational though it may be, that if the doctors went ahead and handed over that magic bullet, they would do themselves out of a job.

The basis for this all-pervasive mistrust of doctors is entirely understandable. Television plays upon the mysteries of medicine. Physicians these days are getting very bad press. Society has always wanted its doctors to be perfect, and when physicians are found wanting, it makes the news.

Some of this bad press is well-deserved; the American Medical Association, which for most laymen represents "the medical establish-



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ment," has long opposed any social answers to the increase in cost of medical care. This opposition to social change from a very conservative minority of physicians is translated by the laymen into a vision of uncaring doctors. After all, when doctors rebel at the very measures designed by big government to save us all, how can we trust doctors? When national health insurance is proposed as THE ANSWER, the doctors, whom we mistrust anyway, oppose this salvation and further erode their own credibility.

The reasons for this mistrust of doctors extend to even more basic levels. The very nature of disease and of the science of medicine promotes this mistrust. Disease itself is unpredictable. It strikes without justice, remits without reason, and is itself not to be trusted. In many cases, struggling for a diagnosis, the physician finds that his only honest statement is "I don't know." He must wait for the disease to declare itself.

Hippocrates recognized this long ago when he said that "the art is long, life is short, diagnosis difficult, decision perilous." Patients don't like this indecision, this unpredictability. They want answers.

Physicians, all too human, may be tempted to give patients what they want. Misdiagnosis, whether justified or not, does in turn give rise to apparent miracle cures. (As in "They told me I had six months to live. It's been ten years.")

Our present day society further adds to this mistrust of doctors. It is a sad fact that we find ourselves now living day to day with deception and dishonesty. From advertising to the deliverance of justice, from hounding politicians to fractured families, we are served up large portions of deceit. Small wonder then that we adopt towards life a stance of suspicion and mistrust.

"I can get it for you wholesale!" Sure.

"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?" Sure.

"I intend to represent you, the people." Sure.

"If you lose weight and stop smoking, you won't feel tired all the time." Sure.

How to cut through this mistrust of doctors? There certainly is no easy answer; perhaps there is no answer at all. The cost in dollars and in health of this mistrust must be profound, and yet, human nature being what it is, we will, most of us, persist in our old ways. It is certainly not sufficient to point out that

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"... life is short, diagnosis difficult, decision perilous."

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medicine is far more complex a science than simple high school chemistry; that doctors are human after all; and that medical science, imperfect at best, is still our best (and only) answer to disease.

We can talk on the one hand about making attempts to instill more honesty in our everyday lives. But is that realistic? We can, on the other hand, ask big government for further regulations of the "health industry." But, in asking for help from an organization which brought us Viet Nam and the federal postal system, are we being any more realistic?

On the individual level, for the people of this community, I would submit that a better understanding about what constitutes a good doctor and good medical care and a more sophisticated knowledge of health matters in

general would lessen this mistrust. The next few articles will be directed toward this end.

But this, too, is not an easy answer. What is advocated here is not passive acceptance of someone else's point of view. Critical thinking is necessary. Does it make sense, for example, when there is a National Cancer Institute, an American Cancer Society, and thousands of researchers throughout the world struggling to find answers to the problem of cancer, that Laetril has any place in cancer therapy?

And when you have answered that question, does it really make sense for you, as a friend and neighbor, to allow others to chase after the magic bullet of Laetril or any other analogous easy solution to disease? Where life and death are concerned, can we really afford to say "to each his own?" □

## THE MAINE POTATOES

by  
Britt Wolfe





# BitterSweet

## Notes:

### THE CHRISTMAS SEAL LADY

Mrs. L. E. Schlanser of Annadale, Virginia has called to our attention the fact that Emily Bissell, The Christmas Seal Lady, has roots in our area. Last spring, when a stamp was issued honoring Emily Bissell, Mrs. Schlanser wrote to say that the famous crusader against tuberculosis had spent her summers on Paris Hill.

Mr. Schlanser also enclosed the following news clipping:

The 15-cent commemorative stamp honoring Emily P. Bissell, the Christmas Seal Lady, pictures her with the red double-barred cross of Lorraine which has been the emblem of the crusade against tuberculosis for the last 60 years.

Emily Bissell was born in Wilmington in 1861 and lived in Delaware all her life, becoming interested in social service and welfare work at an early age. She established the West End Reading Room with the first free kindergarten, the first children's playground and the first free gymnasium for boys in Delaware, helped win passage of the first Child Labor Law, was first president of the Consumers' League and in 1904 helped start the Delaware Chapter of the American Red Cross, serving as its secretary for many years.

In 1907 her cousin, Dr. Joseph P. Wales, asked her to help raise funds to continue work on a new treatment—rest and fresh air—for consumption, a disease for which there was no known cure. An open-air shack big enough for eight patients had been built along the Brandywine and \$300 was needed to keep it open.

She didn't invent the Christmas seal. A Danish postal clerk named Einar Holboell had done that in 1904. But she remembered an article by Jacob Riis in Outlook magazine about the Danish fund drive and decided the idea was worth trying. She sketched out a simple design, found a printer, Charles Story, who was willing to wait for his money, and got permission to sell the "Christmas stamps" at a booth in the lobby of the Wilmington Post Office. Sales totaled only \$25 on Dec. 7 and showed no signs of picking up, so four days later she took the train for Philadelphia to ask for the help of its leading newspaper, the North American. The Sunday editor was not en-

couraging, but she stopped in another office to see a popular columnist, Leigh Mitchell Hodges. He was enthusiastic and went to the editor, E. A. Van Valkenburg, who assigned Hodges full-time to the project. Nearly 400,000 seals were printed and sold in 18 days, clearing \$3,000, enough to continue work at the shack and make a down payment on the site for Hope Farm, now the Emily P. Bissell Hospital.

The American Red Cross and the National Tuberculosis Association, now the American Lung Association, took over the next year. Miss Bissell continued to work with her charitable and social service projects until her death in 1948.

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### HOW GOOD?

William Kinsman of South Paris forwarded a clipping on "the good old days" which provided us with a good deal of food for thought. Some excerpts:

In the perfect era of 1875 you could get a ton of coal for \$14, three cord of wood for \$24. Round steak cost only 27 cents a pound, pork chops cost 11 cents a pound and a dozen eggs was 23 cents. Lamp kerosene cost 20 cents a gallon. A working man, living in a nice residential area, could rent a flat for \$2.50 a week.

Compared to today's multiple shootings, racial stabbings, holdups and political corruption, even the crime in 1875 seemed harmless.

One guy was fined \$10 for getting caught with 96 smelt. A Holbrook man got arrested for drunkenness. Two Randolph men spent a night in the slammer for, "mutual assault," and a Scituate woman was out on bail after getting caught setting fire to her neighbor's hen house.

In 1875 there were no car payments, no automobile insurance bills and, since the 16th Amendment wasn't due until 1913, there were no taxes.

A man making \$10,000 could live like a king, but very few men made \$10,000. The average family of seven people, in fact, had to struggle by on \$735.

Most of that—93 percent—went for necessities.

\$417, or 56.5 percent of the family's yearly income went to buy food; \$124, or 16.8 percent, went for housing; \$49, or 6.6 percent went for heat and light and \$104, or .1 percent went for clothes.

Only one percent of the population owned their own home in 1875, but 11 percent owned a piano, 34 percent owned a sewing machine, 52 percent had carpeting in more than one room and 26 percent owned a church pew. The average family also saved \$24 a year and, what is amazing considering our credit economy, only nine percent were in debt. Priorities, obviously, were different back then.

The family, in 1875, was a strong economic unit.

In 1875 few kids over 12 went to summer camp, joined the Y or hung around Wollaston Beach and got into trouble—instead they worked. In fact, most families could not have survived without them. In some families kids accounted for one-third to one-half of the family income. Back then mothers stayed home, kids went to work.

On the surface things look tough today.

We pay \$20 for a good shirt, \$1.99 for a pound of London Broil steak, \$4.19 for swordfish, 99 cents for a pound of hot dogs, \$3.50 for a movie.

Things, though, are still better than 1875.

Today the annual income is \$17,640. Only 25 percent of that goes for food, 28 percent for housing and 8.2 percent for clothing. That leaves 31.1 percent for boats, new cars, movies, vacations, gourmet dining and baseball games.

So next time you sit down to pay that \$190 monthly car payment, that \$2000 property tax bill or the \$1500 dentist bill just remember, things could be worse.

In fact, they were back in the good old days.

## DEATH MARCH

Like emaciated soldiers  
on a death march,  
knarled trees with naked branches  
trek across a sea of snow.

Jack C. Barnes  
Hiram



## LEAVES AND HANDS

What does the man want  
who comes to my door  
bearing leaves of yellow and red?  
Leaves borne on broken limbs  
not long ago alive  
whose promise would have been  
rained up again in spring.  
What gift does he bear  
outstretched in his palms?  
Leaves who colors burn  
the original fall  
and endless circling search  
for the other center.  
How like hands the leaves read  
and how like hands they reach.

Shannon L. Martin  
Bryant Pond



Merry Christmas!

# An Eyewitness Report of 1816, The Cold Year

by Mary Parsons

"Eighteen-Hundred-and-Froze-to-Death" is the phrase used to describe the "cold year" of 1816. I remember reading that it snowed somewhere in Maine during every month of the year in 1816. I imagined Oxford County under a perpetual blanket of snow. But this was not the case. It was a bad year for farming—there is no doubt about that. But it was not impossible.

While working with old records about South Paris, I came across a reference to the Caleb Prentiss diaries (1812–1818), thought to be written by a resident of Hebron or thereabouts. I recognized the name Caleb Prentiss as being one of the early settlers of Paris. (He was born in 1771 and died in 1838.) The diaries were at the Bangor Public Library, so I went there and xeroxed the diary for 1816. To my delight I found that Caleb kept daily entries which always included the weather. Here was an eyewitness account of the "cold year" in Paris, written by someone who lived through it and farmed through it.

Caleb Prentiss was a farmer. He was also a poet, and the weather that year greatly troubled him:

"It seems like Winter tho' this June  
O may the Weather alter soon  
We are dependent Lord on Thee  
May we resign'd contented be  
We sow the ground & we can plant  
Do Thou O Lord Thy Blessing grant."

The year started off normally enough—"Fair, blustering & cold," Caleb wrote on Jan. 1st, 1816. It snowed Jan. 5th and 6th: was fair and cold until the 12th when a violent northeaster hit. It was cold through the 16th. Then on the 17th came "Violent Rain Storm & in the night Snow went off very much." It rained again on the 24th. The last week in January was "Fair & not very cold."

It stayed mild through the 5th of February, then snow and cold weather hit again and lasted until the 22nd. The last week in February was "Fair & pleasant." Leap Year Day (Feb. 29th) was "Cloudy, Foggy & misty Rain." So far, it seemed a mild winter.

It snowed March 12th and again on the 19th and 26th. The 29th was, "Clear & very cold." The first week in April was fair and moderate

weather, but the 10th of April was "Very clear & quite cold & blustering." It snowed on April 12th and again on the 22nd. March and April seemed to be making up for the mildness of January and February.

The last week in April was "Fair & warm." The winter work of "hawling wood" stopped and Caleb began "twitching up stumps" and "picking up stuff on Rye Field & Burning." On April 25th he "Left off Flannel Waiscoat & Drawers—had my hair cut."

The next day Caleb started harrowing his Rye field—the first step towards spring planting. He was ready for spring, and it seemed for two weeks or so that spring had come. There were fine warm days, a few cool ones, and it rained twice. The rye was planted, then the wheat, then some potatoes which had "sprouted out long in Pail over the fire Place." The "Garden" was ploughed.

On May 3rd Caleb reports, "Black spot to be seen in the Sun about as big as a Star." (It has been suggested that sunspots had some connection with the unseasonably cold weather that was to come.) Then on May 15th the ground "froze considerable hard" and it snowed in the night. For the next three days, Caleb woke to find the ground frozen, but he was able to plant potatoes in the garden. The next week was fair and pleasant, but May 24th there was "white frost & ground froze." Nevertheless, Caleb "sow'd Red Beets in Garden" and planted cucumbers.

The night of May 28th was "very cold—ground froze considerable hard." The next day was "blustering & remarkably cold for the season," but Caleb planted peas. Corn, beans and pumpkins had been planted the day before. The morning of May 31st, the ground froze again, but it warmed up by afternoon, and Caleb continued planting potatoes and "wash'd 28 Sheep."

The next two days were "fair & quite warm." The bad weather reached its climax the week of June 4–10th. June 4th dawned "cloudy & quite cool." Caleb sheared his sheep, but it was so cold put sheep in Barn at night."

"June 6th Remarkable cold blustering weather—very high wind with squalls of snow. Planted 1½

Bls. Potatoes with 3 Load Dung—put sheep into Barn to keep from freezing. At night froze the ground & water froze hard."

"June 7th Very cold with high wind. At Home. Snow Squalls. Went in afternoon & help'd \_\_\_\_\_ dig cellar."

"June 8th Cold & blustering with snow squalls. At Home. Planted 1 3/4 Bl. Potatoes with 3 Load Dung.

It seems like Winter tho' this June  
O may the weather alter soon..."

"June 9th Cold & blustering."

records "very smoaky." The first week in October was fair and cool, but still no rain. On Oct. 6th Caleb reports "Fair & cool with high wind. Sunday... All Day fires rag'd much—men detained from Meeting—many of them." Two days later, Caleb himself was battling a fire that threatened to engulf his house, barn, and fields.

And then the rain came.

"Oct. 9th Wind died away about 8 or nine o'clock & afterward turn'd to the Southward & about noon it began to rain. Mr. Cushman's house & barn much in Danger. Mr. Alva Shurtleff's house & barn in Danger—he had his corn burn over—suppose half burnt up—

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**"Eighteen-Hundred-and-Froze-to-Death" is the phrase used to describe the "cold year" of 1816.**

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The cold snap ended and the weather became "fair & moderate" and even "warm." One June 15th Caleb finished planting the last of his Potatoes and started ploughing for oats. The rest of the month was warm, as were the first five days of July. Then came a five day "cool" spell—"frost this week killed Potatoe vines on Plains by Norway—grass drying up very fast."

August was warm, and Caleb records hawling in "Jags of good Hay." September continued warm and Caleb "haw'd in" 466 sheaves of wheat. But it was dry. "Warm weather & very dry—fires round—damage done by Fires in many Places." The danger of fire grew, as the days passed and no rain came (despite a damaging frost on Sept. 25th).

The weather continued fair, and Caleb reports "clear, all but smoak." Some days Caleb

1 1/2 Acres very good corn. All his flax burnt & almost all his fence. Our neighbors helped us very much or it seem'd as if we must have burnt up. Took up oats a.m. & hawl'd them in after it began to rain—haw'd in Jag of corn P.M. in the rain."

Caleb had been lucky. More rain came, and the year finished out in a normal weather pattern.

A comparison of Caleb's crop yields for 1816 with those of other years, shows that his potato crop for 1816 (102 bushels) and his barley crop (3 bushels) were less than half of what he usually got. But rye, corn, wheat, and flax production remained undiminished (6 1/2 bushels of rye, 44 bushels of corn, 41 1/2



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bushels of wheat, 73¼ lbs. of flax, and 3 bushels of flaxseed). And the apple crop was good (40 bushels).

There were "no good heads of cabbage," and the beet crop, always small, was "poor." The turnip harvest (33½ bushels) was somewhat smaller than usual. Carrot, bean, oat, and pumpkin production was normal (4¼ bushels of carrots, ½ bushel of beans, 3 bushels of oats, and 20-30 pumpkins). So despite a decidedly cold spring and summer, and a dry autumn accompanied by bad forest fires, Caleb's farm survived. It was not a particularly good year for him, but it was not a disastrous one.

Caleb Prentiss was born in Reading, Mass. on Nov. 22, 1771. He married Mary W. Morgan on Jan. 16, 1798, and about that time they left Gorham, Maine and settled in Paris. At first Caleb had a store in South Paris. Then in 1804 he bought Lot 6, in the 9th Range, on the west side of Streaked Mountain near where the

Paris, Hebron, and Buckfield town lines meet, and began farming what is now the Becher place (formerly the Carroll King place). It was here that Caleb spent the "cold year" of 1816. Caleb was 44 years old when the cold year began. His wife Mary was 40, and their children ranged in age from newborn to 16 years old. Caleb continued to farm his land until his death in October of 1838 at the age of 66. He is buried in the King Hill Cemetery.

The old Caleb Prentiss house was torn down in the fall of 1900, and a new house built on the site by Carroll King, Caleb Prentiss's great grandson. □

*Mary Parsons became a student of local history while living for a year at her husband's family homestead, built in the 1790's off the East Oxford Road in South Paris.*



*The Caleb Prentiss farm on Streaked Mountain*

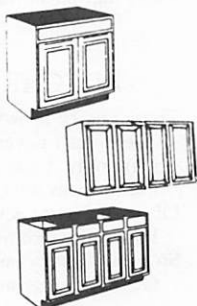
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# Ayah

letters to the editor

## HELP WANTED

I have had a camp on Lower Richardson Lake for many years and am endeavoring to collect historical and other information on the Lower and Upper lakes. This data is intended for my children who will inherit the camp. As a supplement to the written word, I have been borrowing for the purpose of copying, old post cards and photographs of the hotels, camps, steamboats, etc., that were located on the 2 lakes long ago.

Can any readers make suggestions of other sources of the items I am seeking?

Any help will be greatly appreciated.

Herbert P. Shirrefs  
Spruce Head

## AND MORE NAMES

May I add to the interesting "place names" that appeared in the Fall Bitter Sweet?

The Town of Woodstock has many of which the Whale's Back is known in many towns; also, Bear Hollow, Pinhook, Guernsey Island, Egypt, Prairie, Sleepy Hollow Road, Spider Rock, Sygotch, Tar Rock, Slab City, Shingle Hill, Punky Pog, Buck Ledge, Prospect Hill, Tinker Village, The Patch, Molley Ockett Cave, and the Thousand Acres.

Ruby Emery  
Bryant Pond

## A JOY

It was such a joy to see our dear friend, *Bittersweet*, finally arrive for another pleasant visit this month! We wondered and worried whether we would ever be so fortunate again after two months of absence.

The Fall issue, small as it was in comparison to some of the previous ones, was truly as enjoyable as the others. Every piece in its 45 pages is being read and savored. Just keep 'em coming!

Best wishes for continued success.

Anthony R. Stone  
Locke Mills

## LIFE'S QUILT

For many years Maine has been special to us. My father-in-law introduced us to the Sweden area. He had spent many boyhood summers here staying with relatives. He would arrive as early as possible in the spring and stay late into the fall. In later years he returned again and again to spend vacations at Keyes Pond.

We too, fell in love with this part of Maine, bought a lot on Keyes Pond and built a log cabin.

My husband has had summer employment here for many years and our children have not spent a summer elsewhere.

I wrote the following while putting the finishing touches on a patchwork quilt and thought Bitter-Sweet readers might enjoy it:

The unfinished patchwork quilt is spread out on the rustic cabin floor. Its brightness is intensified by the walnut brown of the wood. The sun's rays, shining through the small windows, highlight certain areas. The trailing thread of the needle draws each section together.

While stitching, I think of the patchwork of my life—my childhood on a farm, the love of a close knit family, growing up with birches in the fields, leaves dancing in the sunlight. Then the open fields and woods crowded out by suburbia.

College. The reality of years of an 8-4 office job. Marriage to my childhood sweetheart and the blessing of four children.

Summering in Sweden has brought peace and quiet. The years go by. The patchwork quilt on the floor will be finished soon. My life's quilt, not yet completed. Each past segment has been stitched together but by God's grace there will be more to come.

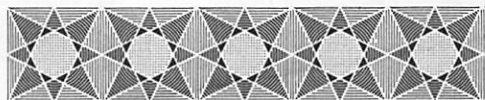
The needle piercing each patch is like life's pains and by it the quilt is strengthened. And just as some areas of the quilt are brighter than others, so have some parts of my life been more radiant than most.

Leaving my sewing, I stand on the cabin porch and survey the scene before me. The sun sparkles on the clear water of the lake. The leaves of the birches dance in the wind. The cool greenness of the forest refreshes my soul.

I turn,

The patchwork quilt is pretty—but—  
God's Gift of Life is Beautiful.

Audrey Susan Mack  
Sweden



Thirty-nine years ago my grandmother wrote "My Christmas Budget." It says things I could say today and mean them, every one.

Alice Parks  
Buckfield

## MY CHRISTMAS BUDGET

Those cheery little words I never spoke,

The notes I never got around to write,  
The friendly deeds I always meant to do

I send them now, my Christmas gift to you.  
Oh, very heavy is the pack, I fear,

But courage comes to me this blessed day;  
So please accept one whole neglectful year

Of jolly things my heart would do and say.

Edith Campbell

## LOON UPDATE

I thought your readers might like to have an update on this summer's loon life on the lakes. Much to our joy, there has been a loon family, with two babies, this year. A solitary adult has also been reported several times, leading to some speculation that perhaps we have the remaining member of the pair, plus an earlier offspring, now fullgrown and raising the next generation. (Loon research, according to Maine Audubon and others, is in such early stages, that it is difficult to say whether offspring return to their hatching place to nest.)

In any case, it has been even more special to watch the loons this summer. Residents of the lake have become increasingly conscious of our special trust. Many cottages now display Maine Audubon society posters regarding loon protection. Co-operative efforts among fifteen families on the lakes have resulted in ensuring that a cove area especially attractive to the loons will remain undeveloped permanently. I think we've all learned a little more about our responsibility in preserving a natural heritage for time to come.

Carol Gestwicki  
North Waterford

An article written by Ms. Gestwicki concerning the shooting, last fall, of a loon which once lived on one of Waterford's Five Kezar lakes appeared in the August issue.—Ed.

*My granddaughter, Amy Cotton, age 13, showed me a poem that she did for an English assignment at Hiram Elementary.*

*I asked her to type me a copy. This is it.*

## FRIENDS

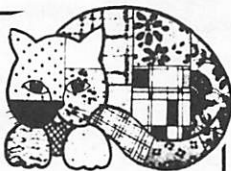
Everybody must have friends.  
You just can't hide away  
With nothing to do all day.  
That's why people should have friends!  
People are friends;  
Dogs are friends;  
Maybe even a dove!  
Everything's a friend  
If you can just find LOVE.

Raymond Cotton  
Hiram

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## A MYSTERY

Taking the prize for this month's best piece of mystery writing is the following correspondence concerning Bethel's energetic chef-in-residence, Herbert Nickerson. The article arrived at our office along with a cordial note explaining that a loyal band of Nickerson fans up in Bethel had decided it was high time to see something about the chef in print. The note and the accompanying article were signed simply "a friend."

Although we admit to being curious about the origins of the piece, we agree with whoever saw fit to send it along that it's high time readers heard about Herbert Nickerson. And, so far as we know, the whole affair will come as a complete surprise to him.—Ed.

### Hail to the Chef

These days, when we have a yen for foods like baked pork and beans, buttermilk pancakes or chicken pie, most likely we head for a can, a package or the frozen foods section of the supermarket. But chef Herbert Nickerson of Bethel has been whipping up the dishes from scratch for fifty years.

These are the kinds of foods that make fast friends. And, for Nick, the folks who have enjoyed his dishes are as important as the meals themselves.

People are spread from coast to coast who remember Nick fondly; some from the days of his little diner in Bath where he started his cooking career and became known as the "Hamburger King"; others from his army days during World War II when, as a battalion mess sergeant overseas, he once fried doughnuts for his men in a bombed out cellar hole somewhere in Belgium.

In 1947 Nick became the chef at the Beta House at Bowdoin College. Since then, he has fed students at Union College, and Hebron and Fryeburg academies. For many years he worked his wizardry in Gehring Hall at Bethel's Gould Academy. Many a skier will recall the big thermos of beefstew that went along on weekends to the skil hill so that kids from Gould could have a good hot lunch while on top of Barker Mountain.

Summers, Nick boiled the doughnuts and grilled the blueberry pancakes at The Chute Homestead in Naples. He also served up students at the science

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Nick Nickerson

sessions held at Bethel's National Training Labs.

Then came the era of the food services and portion control and Nick decided it was time to retire. Since then, he's kept active feeding young hopefuls on NCAA ski teams, hardy souls enrolled in Outward Bound's winter program and student loggers in the Youth Conservation Corps housed at the Sunday River Inn.

This past summer, Nick concocted his gastronomic delights for hikers and members of the Appalachian Mountain Club at the Cold River Camp in Evans Notch.

Today, at 70, Nick still rises at dawn each day to whip up one thing or another. Asked why he still bothers, he answers, "It's my job."

When members of his family come to visit him at his Bridge Street home for dinner, Dad still makes the gravy and scrambles eggs for his grandchildren.

It would be fun to know just how many people first befriended Nick by "bending an elbow." It could be that keeping busy and making new friends is the secret to any long and happy career.

*submitted by "a friend"*

## Can You Place It?



The first two people to identify Norway's old Hotel Stone in last month's **Can You Place It?** were Anna Henderson of Sumner and Pat Pulkinnen of Norway. Bill Ashton of Paris Hill and Lena H. Dean of West Paris also notified us with a correct identification of the building, which was also known as Beal's Tavern. The structure was torn down several years ago and a parking lot now takes its place on Main Street. □

# Can You Place It?

## AUGUST UPDATE

Emma H. Pitts of Harrison and Bob Barber of Bridgton both recognized the August **Can You Place It?** entry as the steamboat landing which operated during the early 1920's on Long Lake in Harrison. The spot where the photo was taken is located in back of Mrs. Pitts' house.

Boys and girls used to be at the wharf when the boats arrived. The passengers would throw coins

over the side and the children would dive for them. I know, for I was one of them. A few pennies in those days bought a lot of candy and gum.

In the background in the photo is Arthur Smith's and Willis Libby's boat houses, Lakeside Grange, and Chapman Bros. Grain Mill & Store.

It sure brings back old memories. I was born and raised in Harrison.



*The Steamer Goodridge—above at Sebago Lake Landing; left entering Songo Lock.*

Clifford Chapman of North Windham provided further information:

Names of the boats could have been, "The Bay of Naples" and the "Goodrich." There were others.

The passengers came by train to Sebago Lake Station, then onto these boats, up Sebago Lake, through the Locks, to Brandy Pond and on into Long Lake and to Harrison. During the stopover the passengers would take lunch at the Elms Inn or the Hotel Harrison, or perhaps vacation at the Summit Springs Hotel.

And from Warren Martin of Boston came more background:

Looking at the picture from left to right is Jasper Harmon's house and the land which he gave to the town of Harrison as a public beach. Next, the three decker flagship of the fleet, with a capacity of approximately 300 passengers, the steamer GOODRIDGE. The next building was a hardware, feed and grain store before it became Ernest Ward's Anchorage. The white building behind the steamer was an ice house owned by Percy Stearns. The second largest of the steamers THE BAY OF NAPLES is tied up at the dock or boat landing.

Behind THE GOODRIDGE stern was my Grandpa and Grandma Martin's house on Main St. Grandpa Warren Milliken Martin worked on both these steamers at one time.

The largest and tallest building on the right is the Harrison Grange Hall also on Main Street. The last building on the far right is the boat office. The car looks like one owned by Mr. John H. Mc Gill, a model-T vintage of the early 20's.

The two steamers were destroyed by fire below the bridge at Naples in 1931-32.

Always enjoy seeing these pictures of "The Good Old Days." They bring back fond memories.



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...Page 8

tified in any small Midwestern town; so too is it easy for New Englanders to identify Margaret's characters with folks in their own town. Perhaps the difference is that people in the Baldwin area sometimes could identify themselves in her novels.

Some folks were angered by her writing.

*Enduring Riches*, published in 1942, would mark the end of Margaret Flint's success as a novelist. It is a fine novel to mark the denouement of her literary career, involving Judith Squire, a "straight-laced spinster," and Calvin Chadwick, who runs the Sebago Lumber Company. Although their marriage has its vicissitudes, each discovers certain "enduring riches" which make life completely worth while.

Eleanor Mitchell explains why her mother failed to have further novels published after 1941: "Mother came to loggerheads with the editors (Dodd-Mead). They wanted changes. She wouldn't change her style." Then with a degree of dismay, Eleanor adds, "People didn't seem interested in good old Maine stories any more."

A few weeks ago I met Margaret's brother Ralph Flint in the Hiram post office.

"Ralph, I am writing about your sister Margaret," I said in a loud voice, for at 90, Ralph has a hearing problem.

"That so?" he inquired with a degree of interest. "Margaret could have made money at writing if she had written for the pulp magazines."

Later in a telephone conversation with Margaret's daughter Eleanor, I mentioned her uncle's comment.

"Mother wouldn't compromise herself. She had standards, and she refused to lower them," she replied.

Margaret's unwillingness to move with the changing tide that would sweep in a new trend in modern American fiction can perhaps be better understood if one becomes aware of her marked affinity for classical literature, art, and music.

"Mother cared very little for anything modern, whether it was literature, art, or music. She loved the classics," Eleanor said.

But Margaret Flint did not abandon her love for writing. She turned to writing short articles for the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Portland Press Herald*, *Portland Sunday Telegram*, and the *Lewiston Journal* on such mundane topics as "Why Should I Buy TV! (She never owned one)," "That Old Wood Stove," "Rock Garden



Vegetables," and "They Pass for Beans." (Margaret was well-known for her delicious baked beans and brown bread.) Often she and her sister Edith Coe would collaborate on articles for newspapers and magazines. Edith did excellent sketches and would illustrate her sister's articles.

For those who knew Margaret well, it became more and more obvious that her failure to continue publishing novels troubled her deeply.

If she could have written another successful novel, that would have meant something," Edith explained.

Margaret was a Christian Scientist. Consequently, she did not believe in doctors but turned to prayer and Christian Science practitioners for cure whenever she suffered an infrequent illness. Once she broke a leg and waited three months for it to heal.

"Mother went on hands and knees up the stairs and back down. She would not go to have it set," Eleanor recalled.

Miraculously, her leg did heal and left her without a noticeable limp.

It was during the summer of 1959 that Margaret Flint's health began to decline. Her sister Edith spent many hours sitting with her, and she showed me a sketch of her sister resting on a chaise longue, looking across her field to the hills she loved so dearly.

"We still refer to them as Margaret's hills," Edith said.

Margaret Flint stubbornly refused to allow a doctor to examine her. Consequently, no one is exactly certain what the nature of her illness was. But her daughter offered an interesting insight on her mother's miasma. "I think she felt her writing days had come to an end. She couldn't seem to publish anything anymore

and for her that was the end of living."

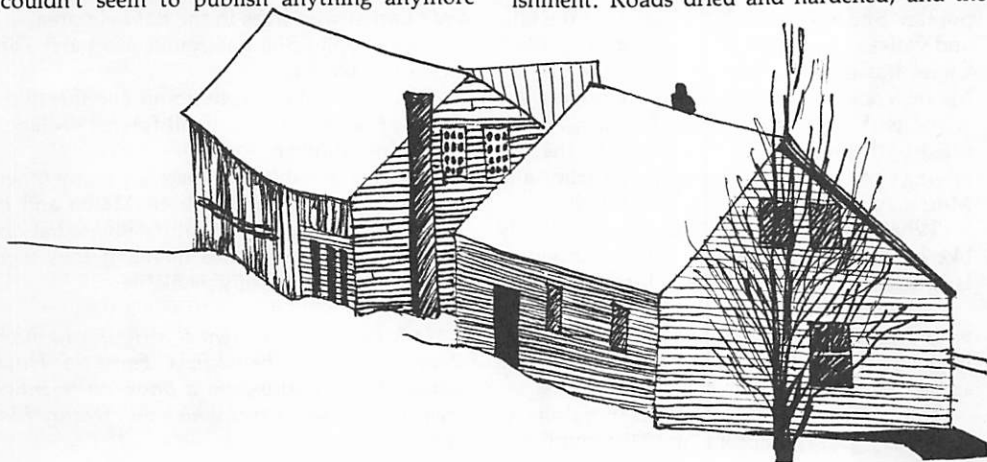
It was during the cold month of January, 1960, that Margaret took leave of the world with which she had been on such intimate terms. Many of her neighbors gathered at her home to help see her through her final hours. Some of the last words that Margaret Flint uttered pertained to a novel she would never live to write.

"'Blueberries,' she kept mumbling 'blueberries,'" recalled her sister Edith, who was at Margaret's bedside during her final hours. "She had been wanting to write a book about a trip she took with her grandfather—her mother's father—to Skowhegan with a horse and buggy to pick blueberries."

Margaret Flint is buried in the cemetery in the tiny village of West Baldwin, just a few hundred yards down the hill from her farm and within view of the dark hills for which she had such a fondness.

Maine has certainly produced its share of writers, including more Pulitzer Prize winners than any other state. The state, with its variety of landscapes, seems to be like a magnetic force that attracts both writers and artists. Many have written about Maine and its people, but few have ancestral backgrounds that are so deeply entrenched in Maine soil as Margaret Flint's and few have manifested such a profound understanding of small town and rural folk who lived among the hills of western Maine during the first half of the twentieth century. How vividly she describes the coming of spring around the early 1920's in her last novel, *Enduring Riches*.

"Spring progressed as it always had done, as it always would do; that it seemed a miracle, delicious and new, was a commonplace astonishment. Roads dried and hardened, and the



# The Last Look



Between Livermore and Jay, January 26, 1929. Winter Up In Maine in the Good Old Days

automobile returned to use, now beginning to outnumber the horses."

Margaret Flint not only has succeeded in depicting rural Maine as it was during the early twentieth century when it was possible for closely knit families to earn a living and find happiness on small farms, but she also has preserved for posterity a rapidly vanishing dialect as our hamlets become more and more cosmopolitan. She has done for the dialect of the hills and valleys of western Maine what Mary Ellen Chase has done for the dialect of the eastern Maine coast. Each of the seven novels she wrote with the setting in the Baldwin area is filled with precious dialogue such as the following conversation between Charlie and Morris Ashburn in the *Deacon's Road*:

"What, don't like hens? Gorry, everybody like hens! Nothin better'n a flock o' Rhode Island Reds—nice, sleek birds, clear-colored—"

"Pshaw!" scoffed Morris. "If ye must fool with stock, it ought to have some sense, like hogs, or hosses. Hell, even a cow has more sense than a hen!"

Among the Margaret Flint memorabilia at the Colby College library are 33 unpublished

short stories and the manuscripts of two unpublished novels—*Hard Cider* and *This Is My Son*. With an apparent resurgence of interest in Maine literature and especially in women writers of Maine, it may be that this nearly forgotten writer, will be rediscovered.

Occasionally I encounter someone who has recently discovered Margaret's novels in one of the local libraries. Mrs. George Stilphen, a talented artist who lives in the Baldwin area, is a good example. She has found Margaret Flint delightful reading.

"Margaret Flint wrote about the life that I knew growing up in a small town in Maine," says Mrs. Stilphen.

It is very possible that there are many others who enjoy good books about Maine and its people who would be equally delighted at discovering Margaret Flint's novels if they were once again made readily available. □

*Jack Barnes, a frequent contributor to BitterSweet, lives at Brookfield Farm in Hiram where he is working on a book on twentieth century Maine writers which will feature Margaret Flint.*

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